LOUIS DE BONALD

Prophète du Passé ?

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux dans la société civile, démontrée par le raisonnement et par l'histoire: Théorie du pouvoir.

Législation primitive, considérée dans les derniers temps par les seules lumières de la raison: Législation primitive.

Du divorce, considéré au dix-neuvième siècle, relativement à l'état domestique et à l'état public de société: Du divorce.

Recherches philosophiques sur les premiers objets des connaissances morales: Recherches.

Mélanges littéraires, politiques et philosophiques: Mélanges.

Démonstration philosophique du principe constitutif de la société: Principe constitutif.

— SECTION I —

INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION[1]

Life began for Louis de Bonald in the manner in which it was to be immortalized - aristocratic, feudal and, above all, Catholic. Born at Millau, France on October 2, 1754, the descendant of one of the old families of the Rouergue, Louis-Gabriel-Ambroise, Vicomte de Bonald later took great pride in retracing his lineage to the time of the Reformation when one of his forebears, Etienne de Bonald (then a member of the Parlement of Toulouse), was largely responsible for the city's complete rejection of the new religious ideas. The title of Vicomte did not, as is sometimes erroneously supposed, originate with Louis himself; but was acquired in the seventeenth century by the family of Bonald when the estate of la Rode came into their possession. It was as the Vicomte de la Rode that Louis de Bonald took his seat in the 1789 Assembly of the Nobility of the Rouergue;[2]

1. This section is based upon the evidence of Henri Moulinié's biography, De Bonald (Paris 1915) - to date, the most comprehensive treatment, based on family papers and local archival records.
2. Laroque et Barthélémy, Catalogue des Gentilshommes du Rouergue, (Paris 1863)p.31. Moulinié,p.4.

moreover, the title appears in his nominations for the Académie française and the Chamber of Deputies - both of which predate his personal entry to the peerage under Louis XVIII.

As befitted such a tradition, Louis was sent for his education to the School of the Oratorians at Juilly where the medieval curriculum of philosophy, logic and mathematics was under the rigid guidance of the Catholic brotherhood. The Superior of the college at the time was Father Mandar(d), whose friendship Bonald was to retain through many years of exile. Apropos the following sections of this thesis, it may not be without relevance to note that this same Father Mandar(d) of Juilly was one of the friends of Rousseau, referred to in the Confessions[3] Rousseau recalls the evening spent with his friend the day before the Parlement of Paris declared its condemnation of Emile. In view of the fact that Bonald himself spent most of his life denouncing the theories of Rousseau, it is worth remarking that the author of the Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard and the staunch upholder of the Théorie du pouvoir both valued the friendship of this influential teacher.

The imprint of his early schooling is everywhere apparent in Bonald's works which grind heavily through the processes of deductive logic to their geometric

3. J.J. Rousseau, Confessions, (ed. Flammarion, Paris, n.d.) Vol. II, Part II, Book XI, (1762), p. 258.

conclusions. Sainte-Beuve, who had even less regard for the manner of Bonald's arguments than he had for the matter, accused him of taking from his Catholic education only what was convenient and orthodox and never achieving what was philosophic and liberal.[4] Of Bonald's style, with its endless repetitions and impossibly contrived three-way divisions and subdivisions, such criticism is justified; but of the man himself, as the events of 1789 show, this picture must needs be modified.

Meanwhile, however, Bonald completed his time at Juilly and returned to Millau to consider his future career. Finally, after much hesitation, in 1773 he joined the royal musketeers and went to live amid the dissolute society of Louis XV's court. Bonald - his biographer reports[5] - resisted the general corruption of the century which, it might be added, in later life Bonald was contrary enough to attribute to the deficient moral code of the democrats. However, Bonald remained with the musketeers until they were disbanded in 1776, after which he returned to Millau, where ten years later he was appointed mayor. And it was in this capacity that Bonald greeted the early Revolutionary days with so much uncharacteristic enthusiasm; he did more than

4. Sainte-Beuve, Constitutionnel (18 août 1851); Causeries du Lundi IV, Quatrième Edition, (Paris, n.d.) p. 428.
5. Moulinié, p. 8.

simply condone the Revolution - he actively supported it.[6] Regarding the development of the man retrospectively, the picture of Bonald as a militant revolutionist rallying his native town "aux armes" for the principles of '89 appears incongruous, and yet it was so. The popular events of that crucial first year: the convocation of the States-General, their reunion at Versailles, the vote-by- head decision of the Third Estate against the wishes of the king and the other two orders, their triumph in the National Assembly empowered to give a constitution to France - Bonald viewed from Millau with approval. In fact, after the king had agreed to dismiss the troops surrounding Paris and Versailles and to recall Necker, the inhabitants of Millau - led by Bonald, now mayor by popular election - convoked an assembly to draw up petitions of approbation. Bonald's speech on this occasion declares his open and wholehearted adherence to the revolutionary principles:-

> ...You could not have regarded with indifference the events which have afflicted, and have consoled, the nation. Your hopes and your thoughts have followed these generous citizens in the brilliant and dangerous course which they are pursuing; and, on the eve of receiving from them the happiness and liberty you have desired, by revealing that you are imbued with

6. Cl. Peyrot, L. de Santi, Le Chevalier de la Gragnotte, avec une étude sur les débuts de la Révolution dans la Rouergue (1892); Moulinié, p.10.

> these sentiments, you show yourselves to be worthy of them; patriotism has brought you together, it will inspire your resolutions...[7]

He sees this assembly as a symbol of the reunion of hearts and wills which the Revolution presages; he predicts that this sacred title of citizen and the prevailing spirit of concord and of fraternity will unify ranks and opinions.[8] After these words the entire assembly proceeded to Notre Dame to sing a Te Deum to express their gratitude for that Providence which had delivered the Revolution up unto France. The following day the three orders of Millau voted unanimously to adhere to the decrees of the National Assembly, and Bonald himself drafted the following letters to the king:

> Sire...the citizens of Millau, crushed beneath the weight of taxes, in learning that the people are about to recover their rights and to be invested by your generosity with a share in your power, look now upon the future with hope... 9

and to the National Assembly:

> ...Every Frenchman has become citizen...All ranks, all distinctions have been swept aside, to be embodied in the

7. J. Artières, Annales de Millau, p. 229; Moulinié, p. 14.
8. Ibid.
9. J. Artières, op. cit., pp. 33ff; Moulinié, p. 16.

> sacred title of Children
> of France... 10

Some months later, Bonald himself entered the records of the National Assembly as the initiator of the"confédération d'honneur" - a project which was adopted by all French municipalities for the maintenance of order and security in the face of the disorder and confusion which the Grande Peur threatened. On the eve of the first popular election, Bonald addressed the citizens of Millau:

> Although associated for three centuries with the destinies of this town, my family has known only its misfortunes. They have watched it time and time again torn by fanaticism, devastated by civil wars, bowed under the yoke of despotism. More fortunate than my fathers, I have seen it reborn under the auspices of liberty; indeed, I was destined to proclaim it to you. My last function as mayor must be to inform you that we shall recover the rights of man and of the citizen. 11

And so, Louis de Bonald, standing on the democratic platform of liberty, equality and fraternity which afterwards was anathema to him, was returned as mayor by 293 of a possible 378 votes.

10. Ibid.
11. J.Artières, op.cit., pp. 241-2; Moulinié, p.18.

From the position of mayor, Bonald went on to become a member and then president of the departmental Assembly; until, in 1791 at the November session, his name does not appear in the register of deliberations. This is the beginning of Bonald's complete and bitter break with the Revolution and its principles. The rupture came, as for so many of the counter-revolutionaries, with the implementation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. At Millau the treatment meted out to refractory priests aroused the wrath of the Catholic citizens and revived the old religious quarrels; houses were raided and pillaged and as the terror spread many of the citizens left the town - among them Bonald.

Coblentz had become the centre of emigre resistance, and Bonald joined the forces gathering to support the prince de Condé; but after many months of fruitless campaigning in the Bourbon regiment, Bonald left for Heidelberg where he lived until 1795 under the assumed name of Saint-Séverin. It was during his exile in Heidelberg that Bonald composed his first work, Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux with no other references at hand, his son reports,[12] than Bossuet's Histoire Universelle and several volumes of Tacitus: information which will surprise no-one who has read the Théorie du

12. Henri de Bonald, Notice sur M.le Vte.de Bonald,(Paris, 1841); Moulinié,p.27. This does not appear in the 1845 edition. See,however,L.de Bonald, Œuvres (Bruxelles, 1845) VIII,pp.446,488.

pouvoir. In addition, the two works which seemed to Bonald to epitomize the political philosophy which he proposed to refute - Montesquieu's Esprit des lois and Rousseau's Contrat social, must have been accessible to him for he quotes copiously and accurately from them. Many years later he explained that he believed that by this work he had fulfilled a duty:

> I took up my pen under the influence of an irresistible impression,

he wrote,[13] and elucidated his impression by the inscription with which he chose to preface the first edition of the Théorie du pouvoir published at Constance by émigré priests in 1796. It is a quotation from the Contrat social:

> If the legislator, mistaking his purpose, establishes a principle contrary to that which arises from the nature of things, the State will not cease to be troubled until such time as this principle is destroyed or changed and invincible nature has asserted her dominion. [14]

In adopting his opponent's standard, Bonald was declaring war on first principles.

Thus, when the work reached Paris, it was seized and confiscated by the Directory whose legitimacy it so obviously attacked, and so Bonald's theories could have

13. Lettre à la Revue Européenne, août, 1834; Moulinié, p. 27.
14. J.J. Rousseau, Contrat social, Bk. 2, Chap. XI (Vaughan ed. Vol. II, pp. 62-63).

little or no effect in the political circles to which they were directed. The general public was entirely ignorant of the work and only a few of Bonald's friends and admirers retained copies of it - notably Chateaubriand, Bonaparte and, rather surprisingly, Sieyès.[15] The Théorie du pouvoir was not reprinted during Bonald's lifetime; although Bonaparte, after his return from Egypt, offered to do so at the expense of the State, Bonald refused permission for what would have been a flagrant compromise of his monarchic and religious principles.

Meanwhile, however, the growing royalist numbers in the two councils of the Directory had made it possible, even if not legal, for émigrés to return to France and in 1797 Bonald arrived in Paris where he remained in hiding until, after the peace of Amiens, he took the prescribed oath of allegiance to the government and the constitution, which enabled him to return once again to Millau. It was during these years in Paris that Bonald's friendship with Fontanes, Chateaubriand, La Harpe and other prominent literary figures with whom he collaborated on the Mercure de France and later the Journal des Débats developed.

But Bonald's retreat from the life and affairs of Paris was short-lived. For many years Napoleon Bonaparte's esteem for the political theorist had been apparent. In

15. See Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., pp. 430-31 (note).

1808, when Napoleon was attempting to capture the Spanish throne for his brother Joseph, a passage from the Théorie du pouvoir:

> Who would dare to seek revenge
> once the king has pardoned?

was inserted in the newspapers at Napoleon's command.[16] Bonaparte was obviously interested in Bonald because he was aware that, with significant modifications, the latter's doctrines could be made to serve as ratifications of his own personal regime and imperial intentions; and he continually sought to employ Bonald's talents in the service of the government. He requested Bonald's assistance in his project against England, which he asked Bonald to treat in a dissertation upon the "liberté des mers". Napoleon himself outlined the argument which was submitted to Bonald; the latter's reply has not been recorded, but the fact that the work never appeared is sufficient evidence of Bonald's defiance. Bonald, in fact, never became reconciled to the imperial regime despite the overtures of Napoleon who, on one occasion, intervened to extricate Bonald from Fouché's charges in relation to the publication of an article on tolerance in the Mercure de France[17] and, on another, extended the bribe of a lucrative position as editor of the Journal

16. H. de Bonald, op. cit., (1845) p. 455 (note).
17. See F. Masson, Napoléon et M. de Bonald. Echo de Paris, (2 mai, 1910); Moulinié, p. 36.

de l'Empire in the vain hope of persuading Bonald to return to Paris.[18]

But apparently the Emperor Napoleon could not always be refused, for in 1810 Bonald was persuaded to accept the position on the Council of the University which he had refused two years earlier and which had since remained vacant - at the command of Napoleon, who is reported to have told Lucien Bonaparte that the position was not available because it had been reserved for M. de Bonald.[19] But Napoleon's victory was a Pyrrhic one; actually, the University Council was not a policy-making body and was required only to deliberate upon questions relating to the reorganization of the education system which were submitted to it. This made it possible for Bonald to retain his position in Napoleon's government without actively contributing to it in any way. The imperial organization of education made no allowance for Bonald's views: that education should be completely subordinated to religion and that teachers should be placed under the direction of the clergy or, better still, replaced by members of religious orders. Naturally loath to put into practice or even to condone principles not in accord with his own, Bonald adopted a policy of passive non-cooperation and, in fact, spent only a few days each year

18. See Fontanes's letter to Bonald, 17 août, 1806; L. de Bonald, Œuvres, VIII, pp. 494-497.
19. H. de Bonald, op. cit. (1845), p. 460

in Paris.[20] When, on behalf of the Emperor, Cardinal Maury approached him with the tentative offer of the position of tutor to the heir to the imperial throne (then "King of Rome"), Bonald made his attitude plain. "I should teach him to rule anywhere," replied Bonald, "save at Rome."[21]

After four years spent thus, it was without regret that Bonald watched Napoleon's departure for Elba and the restoration of the legitimate king, although the terms of the Charter which deprived the king of absolute power were a great disappointment to him.[22] Nevertheless, once again, Louis de Bonald found himself at the head of the deputation from Millau delegated to convey congratulatory messages to the king. Bonald terminated his speech by alluding to the independent stand he had attempted to maintain throughout the Napoleonic regime:

> Sire...(he said)...I have not ceased to respect power, but for a long time I have been unaccustomed to praise it. 23

The king's reply is indicative of the favour in which Bonald was to be held throughout the reigns of Louis XVIII and Charles X:

> ...Millau could not have chosen a more worthy voice to express its sentiments. 24

20. F. Masson, Echo de Paris (6 mai, 1910); Moulinié, p. 39.
21. H. de Bonald, op. cit., p. 463.
22. Victor de Bonald, De la Vie et des Œuvres de M. le Vicomte de Bonald (Avignon, 1853) p. 58; Moulinié, p. 42.
23. Journals des Débats, (3 juillet, 1814); Moulinié, p. 42.
24. Ibid.

Bonald retained his position as Councillor of the University and was recommended by the king for the Académie française; but before the Académie had time to appoint new members, Bonaparte had returned triumphant to Paris. Bonald fled to Aveyron for the duration of the Hundred Days, not to return to Paris until, under the Second Restoration, he was elected to represent his department in the Chamber of Deputies. The elections of 1815 were conducted at the height of the royalist reaction, amid the fear of the White Terror, with France still occupied by the Allied armies; and the result was a monarchist government hostile to the Revolution. This was the famous "Chambre introuvable" - at times more royalist than the king and more Catholic than the Pope - of which Bonald was a prominent member.

Between 1815 and 1822 Bonald was regularly returned to parliament by the electors of Aveyron, a strongly Catholic and pro-royalist constituency. But it was during the first year of his parliamentary career that Bonald experienced his most striking success: largely due to his initiative and intervention, the articles of the Civil Code relating to divorce were completely reversed and, in the name of religion and morality, the indissolubility of marriage was established for nearly seventy years.[25] It was measures such as this that

25. The bill drawn up by Bonald was promulgated on May 8, 1816; it remained in force until 1884.

incurred the wrath of the Liberals, who called the Chambre introuvable "The Terror of 1815" and "The Delirium of '93". Bonald, on the contrary, regarded as the most honourable period of his life his association with this Chamber which, he claimed,

> ...raised in Europe the flag of religion and monarchy,... wished to give to France the only government which was suited to it and to Europe the only guarantees which would pacify it, (and which)...has always sought justice before the law, moderation in matters of taxation, economy in expenditure, security of government. 26

But despite his acclamation of the re-establishment of the legitimate monarchy, Bonald could not condone the terms of the Charter which Louis XVIII had sanctioned;[27] and the ultra-royalist found himself in the dichotomous position of repudiating the king's wishes in order to serve the monarchy. In 1817 he wrote to Mme de Sèze:

> Sometimes it is necessary to serve the king, not only without hope of recompense, but in the certainty of displeasing him. 28

And this theme appears again in an article in the Journal des Débats entitled "Can one contradict the

26. Conservateur (juillet,1819); Moulinié,pp.83-84.
27. At the commencement of the 1815 session, all deputies were required to swear allegiance to the Charter; Bonald avoided this by remaining absent. The stratagem did not go unnoticed. See Villèle's letter to his father (8 octobre,1815); Moulinié,p.141.
28. 3 août,1817; Moulinié,p.89.

monarch out of zeal for his cause?"[29] Then, in 1822, Bonald was admitted by edict to the king's Privy Council - "the position is merely a sinecure," he wrote to a friend.[30] The following year - 1823 - Louis XVIII called him to the Chamber of Peers, possibly in an attempt to mollify Bonald's rancour, but the latter never wavered in his attack upon the Charter. Discouraged by the fall of Villèle, even the return of the Ultras to power under Polignac failed to encourage Bonald. No parliamentarian, least of all Polignac, he averred, was capable of saving a society which was constituted on false principles.[31]

> The evil lies in
> the Charter

he wrote to his friend Senft,[32] when it became obvious that the days of the Bourbons were numbered. Finally, after his appointment to the presidency of the Censorship Board in 1827 and the unpopularity and rupture with Chateaubriand which resulted, Bonald severed his connection with parliamentary affairs, although he himself had rendered this appointment a foregone conclusion. For many years he had made public his rigid views on the subject of censorship. In 1817 he had spoken in favour of it, likening the role of censor to that of author's friend, permitted to read manuscripts before publication. In

29. 13 septembre, 1819; Ibid.
30. Lettre à Mme de Sèze (7 mars, 1822); Moulinié, p. 45.
31. See Henri de Bonald, op. cit., p. 480.
32. 8 août, 1829; Moulinié, p. 95.

this way, censorship became for Bonald a "truly liberal institution", far preferable to judicial repression.[33] Even capital punishment Bonald defended on the grounds that it "merely sent a criminal before his natural judge".[34] Paul Courier voiced the hostility of his generation when he replied:

> Go and teach all nations, said the Master; but it is not written, Go with the police and teach. 35

Towards the end of 1829, therefore, Bonald retired to Monna, where he put the finishing touches to the Démonstration philosophique du principe constitutif de la société: a résumé of his previous publications. The work appeared early in 1830 on the eve of the second revolution in defiance of his principles.

In spite of the active part which he had played in political affairs during the Bourbon restoration, Bonald's publications had continued to appear: in 1817 the Pensées, in 1818 Observations sur l'ouvrage de Mme la baronne de Staël, and in 1819 the Mélanges - a collection of articles which had appeared in the Mercure and the Débats;[36] and he contimued to contribute to the periodical press which had always been such a powerful weapon of the opposition. In 1816 the Correspondant - a monthly review designed to

33. See Bonald's speeches in the Chamber of Deputies, 28 jan, 1817 and 19 dec, 1817; Œuvres VI, p. 363ff; cf VIII, p. 207ff.
34. Quoted by Jules Simon, Philosophes et Publicistes Contemporains - M. de Bonald - Revue des Deux-Mondes (27) 1841, p. 514; and Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., p. 436.
35. Quoted in F. B. Artz, Reaction and Revolution 1814-1832 (New York, 1963) p. 228.
36. The Mercure was suppressed in 1807 by Napoleon following a subversive article by Chateaubriand; and the Journal des Débats became, in 1806, Napoleon's mouthpiece, the Journal de l'Empire.

bring about the fusion of interests, tastes, and principles of France and England[37] appeared for the first time in England. Both Bonald and Chateaubriand were associated with it throughout its short existence. Two years later, after negotiations between Vitrolles, Frénilly, and the principal members of the group of Ultras, a new journal was started which for a brief period became the centre of royalist resistance. This was the Conservateur; but with the fall of the Decazes ministry the Conservateur's purpose had been fulfilled and it ceased to appear;[38] whereupon Bonald directed his contributions to the arch-royalist Quotidienne.

During these years Bonald was also an habitue of many of the leading salons of the Restoration. Lamartine records[39] that Bonald was often present at the salon of the princess de la Trémouille, and it was at the salon of Mme Charles that Bonald and Lamartine became acquainted. Naturally Bonald frequented the ultra-royalist gatherings of the Baron de Frénilly,[40] and often accompanied Chateaubriand to the salons of Mme Récamier and Mme de Beaumont;[41] for these men - Bonald, Frénilly and Chateaubriand - at this time shared identical religious and political views, collaborating first on the Mercure

37. A. Chuquet (ed), Recollections of Baron de Frénilly. (London, 1909) p. 282.
38. Although Bonald, Lamennais and Frénilly continued it for some time under the name of the Défenseur.
39. Lamartine, Histoire de la Restauration (Paris) II, p. 426.
40. A. Chuquet (ed), op. cit., pp. 284, 293, 353.
41. Chateaubriand, Mémoires d'outre-tombe (Paris) 1949, PartII, pp. 25-27.

de France and later on the Conservateur. The other partner associated with the Conservateur was Lamennais - for many years a disciple of Bonald, although he, like Chateaubriand, suffered a change of heart, eventually rejecting Roman Catholicism. De Haller, whose Restauration de la science sociale (published between 1816 and 1820 in German) was an apologia for Catholicism analogous to Bonald's own, was a staunch supporter of the principles of the Théorie du pouvoir.[42] But the supreme expounder of Bonaldian traditionalism was the Savoyard counter-revolutionary, Joseph de Maistre. Their theories bore such a marked resemblance that de Maistre, towards the end of his life, wrote:

> I have thought nothing that you have not written; I have written nothing that you have not thought, [43]

and almost invariably, when the counter-revolution is discussed, the names Bonald and de Maistre follow one another as the night the day. This is rendered the more remarkable by the fact that the two men never met: on the only occasion that de Maistre went to Paris, Bonald had been called away to Monna; so that it is doubtful if Bonald could be said to have exercised any influence upon de Maistre. Although de Maistre's Considérations

42. Both the work and de Haller were brought to Paris by Bonald; de Haller was a Swiss Protestant converted to Roman Catholicism. Bonald was certainly influential in this conversion, which rendered de Haller ineligible to represent his Protestant constituency and forced him to Paris, where Bonald was instrumental in placing him on the editorial staff of the Débats; Moulinié, pp. 60-2.
43. See L. de Bonald, Principe constitutif..., chap. XVII, Œuvres VIII, p. 108 (note).

sur la France and the Theorie du pouvoir were published coincidentally and postulate identical maxims, certainly they develop along very different lines.[44]

Nevertheless, it was outside Parliament, among these representatives of the Traditionalist School, that Bonald's influence was felt; his parliamentary career, after the divorce law of 1816, was a story of dogged opposition and failure. Even Charles X did not admit him to his Privy Council. Acting always in accordance with his intractable principles, Bonald regarded all compromise as defeat; to speak of the centre was to declare revolution, for between monarchy and democracy was no-man's land.

> Either society must be
> a monastery or... an
> evil place

he wrote.[45] It is little wonder that Louis de Bonald became, for his contemporaries and for posterity,[46] the very incarnation of the ancien regime...

44. See the comparative study by Emile Faguet, Politiques et Moralistes du dix-neuvième siècle. (Paris, 1891) Vol. I, pp. 69-70.
45. Lettre à Senft (16 février, 1824); Moulinié, p. 140.
46. Bonald died at Monna on November 23, 1840, aged 87 years.

INTRODUCTION

> ... (Chateaubriand) looks upon me as an aged man dreaming dreams of a by-gone century,

wrote Bonald to de Maistre in 1821,[47] and posterity, on the whole, has agreed with Chateaubriand. Less than one year after Bonald's death, Jules Simon wrote (in reply to the official panegyric of the Académie française):-

> (Louis de Bonald) must be counted among the most irreconcilable enemies of our liberties...Even now his political cause is lost for ever and his philosophy dead - or dying. 48

It has continued to be exhumed from time to time, however, as the fortunes of the Action française have waxed and waned. But apart from the Traditionalists

47. Quoted by Sainte-Beuve, op.cit., p.448.
48. Jules Simon, op.cit., pp.515,544.

themselves (notably Barbey d'Aurevilly and Paul Bourget),[49] who naturally draw heavily upon Bonald's dogma in support of their own, opinions have changed little. Until the 1920s, in fact, critics had concurred with Professor Laski's evaluation of Louis de Bonald:

> He was totally out of accord with the spirit of his time. All for which it came to stand he branded as the utmost sin; all for which he cared was lost at the barricades of 1830. The monarchy for which he cherished so passionate an affection destroyed itself by acting on his principles. He urged nothing that history, if it did not falsify, at any rate failed to respect. He did not, like de Maistre, die before the course of events had proved the impossibility of his ideals. He did not, like Lamennais, find in the events of his age the basis of a better philosophy. He belonged always to the eighteenth century, not indeed in the essentials of its intellectual attitude, but in its dogmatic and inflexible spirit. 50

And these conclusions are easily reconciled with the facts. Essentially, Bonald had become a political writer in response to a particular set of circumstances; and Bonald - however much he might argue to the contrary ("universal, absolute truth") - never lost sight of this

50. H.J. Laski, Authority in the Modern State (Yale, 1919), p. 128.

49. See Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, Prophètes du Passé (Paris, 1851) and Bourget et Salomon, Le dix-neuvième siècle (Paris, 1905).

fact. As one who had survived the chaos and terror of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, he felt himself compelled to lead the chosen people; not onward to the Promised Land, but back - for, to Bonald, it was truly to be Paradise Regained. To this end, he set himself to oppose the "false" doctrines which had triumphed with the Revolution by expounding the "true" principles of human society.

The "false" dogma which he proposed to refute was that of the eighteenth-century philosophes - in particular, of Rousseau and Montesquieu[51](as well as, incidentally, Condorçet[52]and Voltaire[53]). Man, they had proclaimed, is naturally good and, by his nature, possesses certain sacred and imprescriptable rights; society is the work of man and rests upon a contract voluntarily undertaken between the members of the social group; all authority in the state originates in the people: the true sovereign, source of the constitution, the government, and the laws, which accepts no other direction than the general will. Such, in brief, is the creed which Bonald set out to refute. But, in doing so, he was to accept more of its tenets than he (or his critics) realized.

On the contrary, Bonald argued, man tends naturally

51. Preface to Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp.17,18.
52. e.g. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres IV, pp.161-163.
53. e.g. "Des écrits de Voltaire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp.7-23.

to be bad[54] and needs to be guided and repressed by an authority outside himself;[55] man (he continues) exists for society and not society for man; he has, not rights but duties, to fulfil:

> ... The Declaration of Rights is only a partial truth... it is necessary to define for man rather less of his rights and rather more of his duties. 56

Society is a necessary and primary condition - the work of nature, not the conventional and arbitrary arrangement of man; all authority derives from a power superior to that of man - from, in fact, God;[57] laws therefore are the necessary rapport between natural phenomena, not the work of the legislator - man cannot give a constitution to society any more than he can give weight to matter. And in his mystical account of the origin of society, Bonald calls to task not only Rousseau but also Hobbes:

> Was (the establishment of society) the outcome of force or the result of a contract? Definitely not. The institution of public power was neither voluntary nor forced; it was necessary, which means that it conformed to the nature of social beings; and its causes and its origin were perfectly natural. 58

This opposition stems from a fundamentally antithetical point of view. The philosophy of the

54. e.g. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.32; Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.33.
55. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.34.
56. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, pp.224-5.
57. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.38.
58. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.55.

eighteenth century is based upon the - for Bonald - dangerous presupposition of individualism: the initial error which breeds all other errors. In society it recognizes only the individual, reduces everything to the individual, and has for its end the full development of the individual through the realization of the rights of the individual. For Bonald this is tantamount to defining society as a rope of sand - social nihilism, anarchy, no less;[59] for the individual exists only in and for society![60] society makes man what he is and is responsible for what he becomes; apart from the familial, religious and professional groups which constitute society, man has no identity. Except - and here is a problem - except for the men of genius; men like Charlemagne, who

> gave to Christian Europe
> the impulsion which is
> still felt...., 61

like Clovis:

> a man of great genius (who)
> raised on indestructible
> foundations the edifice
> of the French Empire, 62

and even Voltaire:

> who is responsible for the
> misfortunes of France.... 63

59. e.g. "Du traité de Westphalie", Œuvres II, p.430.
60. "Du perfectionnement de l'homme", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp.516-517.
61. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.113.
62. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.225.
63. "Des écrits de Voltaire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.23.

The final section of this thesis will be devoted to analyzing the adequacy of Bonald's solution to the problems raised by Voltaire and the role of the individual as a causative factor in history; and has been prompted by the suspicion that perhaps Bonald's unchallenged "anti-individualist" attitude might be in need of a reappraisal.[64]

Of course, (Bonald continues) Rousseau, Montesquieu and the men of '89 and '93 are not innovators - they have only drawn the conclusions of the sixteenth-century's premisses. And Bonald retraces the origins of their erroneous dogma to the Reformation.[65] He sees in the spirit of free examination and individual reasoning the seeds of revolution not only in the Church but in the State; in the Church in the seventeenth century when the religion of authority was challenged by the theists and the atheists; in the State in the eighteenth century when the Revolution destroyed the power of the monarchy. Opposing thus the individual to the group, the reason of each to the reason of all, the authority of the evidence to the evidence of Authority, the work of man to that of nature, the arbitrary to the necessary, the artificial to the natural, he strives to show that, just as the strength of religious authority waned with the

64. See infra, Section V :"Voltaire and History."
65. Principe constitutif, Chapitre XX, Œuvres VIII, pp.124-130.

break from Rome, so the strength of domestic harmony was disrupted by the institution of divorce, and the strength of political power with the advent of democracy. The French Revolution has only consummated the trend initiated by Calvin and Luther.[66]

For the disintegration begun by the Reformation, according to Bonald, there is but one remedy - complete and unequivocal return to the state of authority - in religion, in the family and in the State.[67] Individual judgments can be nothing more than opinions which are particular and transitory; what man must know are the absolute, universal and eternal truths, found not in the reasoning of men, but in the reasoning of humanity - that is, in nature itself, which is God. And how can man come to understand this wisdom, which is not his to reason but to know ? - By studying history and by analysing society and its traditions, particularly the vehicle of all tradition - language. And what he will find is (a surprise for which Bonald did not prepare his readers because he did not perceive it himself) the divinely determined plan for the successive development of the human race: a doctrine of progress and perfectibility which might begin with Catholicism but which suggests marked affinities with the earthly

66. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, pp.17-19.
67. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, pp.18-21.

city of the eighteenth-century philosophers. The ensuing investigation[68] into the degree of Bonald's commitment to the rational doctrine of the Ideologues whom he scorned has been instigated by this apparent convergence with the Enlightenment.

It is upon the "conclusive" evidence of history and tradition, without which its principles would be mere abstract postulates, that the Théorie du pouvoir is based. But, if this is really so, Bonald is sponsoring contradictory arguments, for what he is claiming as his own method is the very historical, empirical claim to fame of his adversaries. Either Bonald is working from the revealed word to absolute truth which is beyond proof or he is accepting the methodological innovations of Newtonian science. If the former, he is guilty of the very crime with which he reproaches his unbeloved infidels: his "men of imagination"[69] who proceed from the principles to the facts instead of from the facts to the generalizations. In any case, even the presence of such an accusation suggests that there are anomalies in this aspect of Bonald's thought which are in need of clarification.[70]

For, in all the works which follow (see particularly

68. See infra, Section IV : "Condorçet and Enlightenment".
69. "Bayle, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques, Helvétius, Diderot, etc." Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.14.
70. See infra, Sections III and V : "Montesquieu and Society"; "Voltaire and History".

the Législation primitive and the Recherches philosophiques) this recourse to history and tradition is supplemented by the theory of language which, in its philosophical ramifications, becomes the pivot of Bonald's doctrine.[71] Language Bonald sees as the means by which are transmitted from generation to generation the traditions which embody the social and moral truths. But language is nothing more than the expression of thought and the one only exists with - and because of - the other. Thus the origins of tradition - that is, of society itself - must be the source also of thought and of language. So that only if man can be proved to have invented language can he be said to have founded society. If, on the other hand, language can be proved to have been a gift of God, it follows that truth and wisdom are to be found there also; and God becomes the true founder of society. Against the arbitrary plan of the eighteenth-century rationalists, Bonald poses the divinely ordained; and Bonald bases his proof upon the aphorism: man thinks his words before he speaks his thoughts.[72] Therefore, to have invented language man would first have required the conception of language; but to have conceived the idea - since the idea implies the expression - he must already have possessed the spoken language: a contradiction

71. Législation primitive, Bk. I, Chap. I, Œuvres I, pp. 275-280; Recherches, Chap. II, Œuvres V, pp. 72-139; see also Christian Maréchal's analysis in "La Philosophie de Bonald", Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne, X, 1910.
72. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p. 28.

which reveals the absurdity of the atheists' attempt to spurn the evidence of revelation.[73] Witness Rousseau, who gives evidence in favour of Bonald's case, before dismissing it unresolved:

> ... since the spoken word would appear to have been a necessary pre-requisite to the establishment of the spoken word, ... and convinced of the impossibility that language could have been a purely human invention, I leave to those who are prepared to undertake it the discussion of this difficult question... [74]

It would appear, therefore, that students of Bonald, perhaps mistaking inflexibility for consonancy, have credited him with greater consistency than his work at times warrants. Perceiving that the logical outcome of a divinely ordained society constituted upon the revealed word is a constitution based upon the Decalogue (a commandment for all men at all times and in all places![75] a yardstick for all legislators) most critics seem to have overlooked the discrepancies which the Théorie du pouvoir suggests. In fact, the appeal to revelation (which of course accentuates Bonald's absolutist tendencies) has been exaggerated by many of his

73. Législation primitive, Œuvres II, pp.72-75; Recherches philosophiques, Œuvres V, pp.53, 78-79.
74. "Discours sur l'inégalité". The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Vaughan ed.) Oxford, 1962. Vol.I, pp.155, 158.
75. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.335.

interpreters at the expense of underrating Bonald's constant and primary appeal to history (which is, just as naturally, conducive to relativism). Although, since the 1920s when Horatio Smith's article "Relativism in Bonald's Literary Doctrine" appeared,[76] this facet of Bonald's thought has been recognized, it has been a limited recognition, restricted to particular aspects of his work. (Mary Quinlan - in 1953 - speaks of the tension between Bonald's historical and his political thought.[77] Whereas in fact it would appear to be part of a fundamentally dichotomous approach which is at the very root of his doctrine. This problem also - which, by implication, challenges the "extreme reactionary" interpretation of Bonald - has seemed to merit more attention than it has previously been given.[78]

History, tradition and revelation then are the fixed points by which Bonald plots his neat trilogy of principles, first formulated in the Théorie du pouvoir in the guise of the rapport between a will (volonté) which commands, a love (amour) which directs, and a force (force) which executes.[79] This axiom becomes Bonald's eternal triangle, which he sees perpetuated in all spheres of existence: in society, in God, in man himself. Later, it was expressed in terms of the

76. In the Journal of Modern Philology (Chicago), 22, (1924) pp. 193-210.
77. M. Hall Quinlan, The Historical Thought of the Vicomte de Bonald (Washington, 1953) pp. viii-ix.
78. See infra: Section V, "Voltaire and History".
79. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 35.

"general will" or sovereignty (this is the will of society, nature or God), the "general power" which is the minister or agent of the general will (such as the head of domestic or political society), and the "general force" which is the instrument of general power (for example, the subject by which or for which the action is performed). From this trinity of elements, in which he discerns the image of the fundamental dogma of the Christian religion, Bonald deduces the law of the unity of power and the perpetuity of social distinctions:

> ... when (at the birth of society), in the midst of danger and uncertainty, there emerges a man strong in thought and deed who sways the multitude, voilà le pouvoir; when the men who, after him, are the most capable and courageous join him as counsellors and agents, voilà les ministres du pouvoir; and when the others, under the protection of the intelligence and courage of these men, serve as the instruments of action... voilà les sujets... 80

Their complement ? - Voilà toute la constitution de la société: "pouvoir", "ministre" and "sujet", which is, after all, only the microcosmic expression of the

80. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, pp. 55-56; Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 342.

vast universal trinity of cause, means and effect which Bonald observes reflected in all forms of association: in the general relationship of man with God, it becomes God, Man-God, man; in religious society proper - God, priests, believers; in political society - king, nobility, subject-peoples; in domestic society - father, mother, children; even the constitution of man he views as an hierarchy of elements - intelligence, organs and objects.[81] Why this uniformity ? - Because the constitution of a society is

> the necessary result of the nature of man and not the product of his genius or (of) the fortuity of events. 82

Always the constitution is the same: in man as in the universe; in the State as in the family and in the Church; man, family, State, religion and universe are represented as so many concentric circles devolving upon the unique centre of the universe: God.[83] In a plethora of mathematical formulas, Bonald describes the relationship of each circumference to the centre:- the cause is to the means as the means is to the effect; so that the sovereign is to the minister as the minister is to the subject; the father is to the mother as the

81. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, pp.5-9, 84-89; Législation primitive, Œuvres I, pp.386-387.
82. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.68; see also Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.79.
83. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.102.

latter is to the child; and so on,[84] worlds without end. It was this obsession for "unite", "uniformite", "union" which led Emile Faguet to write his satirical epitaph for Bonald:

> I have had only one idea
> in my life - And therefore
> I have had all possible ideas -
> And I have proved that all
> these ideas were none other
> than the first. [85]

Thus determined, all the elements of society fit neatly into their allotted places to fulfil their determined roles: like but never equal, in the social hierarchy at whose pinnacle, necessarily in solitary confinement, omnipotence resides. However, Sainte-Beuve, after reading Bonald (whom he dubbed "the modern Pythagoras"),[86] complained that, once begun

> ... one could no longer
> see the light of day,
> much less the Heavens
> which he expressly wished
> to show one. [87]

The constitution, then, is society's "manière d'être", whence it follows that the administration fulfils the function of its role as the "manière d'agir".[88] And in

84. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.343.
85. E. Faguet, op.cit., p.73.
86. Sainte-Beuve, op.cit., p.442.
87. Ibid.
88. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.375.

his various treatises upon the many facets of administration - the communes, the Church, the provinces, the war, finance, judiciary - Bonald claims to recreate the natural order revealed by history and tradition, and pronounces, as the consequence, his renowned eulogy of feudalism.[89] But even in this, Louis de Bonald bears the marks of the "interregnum" he seeks to efface; as enthusiastically as Condorçet or the Encyclopedists he (who expects everything of nature and nothing of man !) extols the value of education which is the incumbent duty of every administration.[90]

Bonald by now has established the natural and necessary conditions of social existence: the sovereignty of the general will and the subordination of the particular wills (which ensures the unity, permanence and independence of the sovereign); and the perpetuity of the ministry which acts on the authority of the sovereign solely for the good of the

89. The Législation primitive is the most comprehensive statement of Bonald's political philosophy, since it contains the all-important theory of language which does not appear in the work which pre-dates it, the Théorie du pouvoir. However, Bonald's writings, taken together, do not form a whole; all of the major works tend to be repetitive so that the final piece, Principe constitutif, is really a succinct resume of the previous arguments. For this reason, it has not seemed worthwhile to indicate more than one source, except where another has added materially to the significance.

90. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.154; see also "De l'éducation et de l'instruction", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp.459 ff.

subject; as well as the obedience of the subject which is the object of the solicitude of the sovereign and the ministry. And, it follows, this constitution is of universal applicability because the political society is but the prototype of all other societies; so that the same logical deductions which lead Bonald to conclude that the only truly constituted political society is the absolute monarchy, lead him also to declare the indissolubility of marriage in the domestic society, and the perfection of Christianity or, more precisely, of Catholicism, in the religious society. Civil society, being for Bonald the union of political and religious societies,[91] thus incorporates the constitutions of both: in their perfected form - absolute monarchy and Catholicism. For Bonald

> The religion of the unity of God and the constitution of the unity of power converged (finally) in Europe. 92

According to whether or not societies put into effect these principles of natural law, so are they "constituted" or "non-constituted".[93] For Bonald, the classification is categoric; there can be no compromises, for constitutions are designed, not by legislators, but by God:

91. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.62.
92. Ibid, p.68.
93. Ibid, p.42.

> The admirers of Aristotle speak to us of the one hundred and fifty-eight constitutions which he studied; as if there were more than two, one good ... and one bad... that of the unity of power and that of the plurality of powers! 94

From the constitution, Bonald distinguishes the government; from the fundamental laws which shape society, he perceives the political laws which distribute the power. In constituted societies, the government arises out of the constitution and consequently is in harmony with it; the political laws are the natural and necessary concomitant of the fundamental laws. Other societies, however, which really are not societies at all but merely superficial associations, lacking a constitution, possess only a government imposed artificially from above which is neither natural nor necessary.[95] In the latter, the general will is identified with the sum of the particular wills - the mistake, according to Bonald, of all democrats, particularly the arch-democrat, Rousseau:

> The will of the entire population, even if it were unanimous, is only the sum of the particular wills, and cannot be the general will... 96
> ... the principal political error of J.J.Rousseau (and the

94. Pensées, Œuvres VI, p.42.
95. Ibid, pp.42 ff.
96. Ibid, p.35.

> authors of that memorable declaration) was to confound the "general" will with the "collective" will... an error perpetrated by Condillac who, by mistaking "general" ideas for "collective" ideas, invoked atheism, just as Jean-Jacques invited anarchy. 97

In fact, monarchy and democracy embody, in their extreme forms, all the perfections and all the vices of governments and societies. At one extreme Bonald idealizes the French monarchy at the height of its security and power; at the other, he denounces the republic of '93 - the Terror of democracy. On the one hand, unity, continuity, tradition and peace; on the other, plurality, anarchy, ambition and war.[98] This, in the final analysis, is the original opposition of society to the individual, of the general to the particular, of nature to man, of the necessary to the arbitrary. And so Bonald arrives at his paradoxical conclusion: that true liberty and equality exist only in a monarchic regime,[99] while the claims of democracy, subject to the arbitrary and particular whims of individuals, are illusory and false: the philosophes have mistaken the shadow for

97. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.75, note 1.
98. e.g. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp.108-112, 278; "Discours politiques sur l'état actuel de l'Europe", Œuvres II, p.300.
99. See Jules Simon, op.cit., p.514.

the substance, the ashes for the phoenix. But how many of their fires were to burn again before Bonald's own sacred cows? Natural law - borrowed perhaps from the Contrat social? Political science - Montesquieu-inspired? Humanity's progress towards an earthly Utopia - Condorçet's influence? Voltaire's philosophy of history - refuted or appropriated?

Barbey d'Aurevilly, only a decade after Bonald's death, committed him to his literary asylum for prophets of the past where, half a century later, Emile Faguet found him and (intuitively rather than rationally) wrote of him:

> This man of the past
> had much of the future
> in him. 100

Another half century has passed and still the question is begging: How much of the future had Louis de Bonald in him?

100. E. Faguet, op. cit., p. 98.

— SECTION II —

ROUSSEAU and NATURE

Royalists, Maurras pointed out, may be Christians "first of all", that is, they may invoke the design of God (divine right) in justification of monarchy; or they may be positivists, and appeal to natural law and history.[1] Louis de Bonald, without a doubt, qualified for the former category - first and foremost he was a Christian. He even introduced the Théorie du pouvoir with the remark that

> God is a fundamental truth
> and will be taken for granted
> in this book. 2

But Bonald did not perceive, or at least did not consider, that the two categories were mutually exclusive; and, relegating Christian revelation to parentheses, set out to validate his Catholic conclusions by appealing to natural law and history.

* * * * * *

The circumstances and motives which gave impetus to Bonald's writings dictated also his methods. To

1. Charles Maurras, "Le Dilemme de Marc Sangnier", La Démocratie religieuse (Paris, 1921) pp. 34-36; Charlotte Muret, French Royalist Doctrines since the Revolution (New York, 1933) p. 226.
2. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 24.

refute the philosophes - to refute Rousseau, Montesquieu, Condorçet and Voltaire - was the task Bonald set himself, and it followed that to be conclusive, his refutations must be on their terms, and these terms included "history", "progress", "reason" and, before all else, "nature".

> I have quoted Montesquieu and J.J.Rousseau a great deal,

wrote Bonald in the preface to the Théorie du pouvoir;

> In fact, how could one write on political theory without citing the Esprit des lois and the Contrat social? 3

Certainly Bonald could not afford to do so, as he readily professed:

> I gladly acknowledge them both in my work, when they accord with my principles, because, if these illustrious writers had not sustained a fundamental fallacy, they would have perceived great truths and expressed them forcefully. 4

Time and time again Bonald has recourse to the testimony of his adversaries to express his own ideas, not so much to emphasize their occasional similarities as to

3. Ibid, p.17.
4. Ibid, p.18.

underline their fundamental divergence. For, to Bonald, the Théorie du pouvoir and the Enlightenment were diametrically opposed, they were antithetical and they were incompatible.[5] . . To Bonald, from the vantage-point of exile, the disorder and anarchy of the Revolution appeared to be the inevitable outcome of the application of Rousseau's principles.[6] The Terror - which represented all that Bonald most hated - could be traced to the Contrat social. The Revolution itself should be sufficient proof of the error of Rousseau's ways, but to ensure that the culprit was recognized, Bonald determined to expose the fallacies of the philosopher from Geneva, and incidentally provided the Counter-Revolution with its rationale.

Man, claimed Rousseau, is naturally good, and it is society which corrupts him. No, Bonald replied, man is naturally bad and it is society which perfects him; by nature, he is weak and governed by his passions; and in order to offset his weakness and to suppress his passions, he needs an authority outside himself: this is precisely the role that society fulfils.[7] Before arguing that man is naturally good or naturally bad, however, Bonald found it necessary to clarify the

5. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, pp. 257-258.
6. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 19.
7. Ibid, p. 10.

meaning of "nature", because this belief in a natural order and in natural law is just as basic to his own ideology as to the thought of Rousseau. As soon as he does, Bonald discovers in Rousseau's definition the fundamental error of the philosophe - for the author of the Contrat social, in Bonald's view, mistakenly identifies "naturel" with "natif". And this is a distinction which Bonald regards as crucial: the "natif" or original state is the primitive state - for man, represented by childhood, for humanity, by barbarity and ignorance; in fact, a state of weakness and imperfection. On the other hand, the "naturel" state is the state of fulfilment, of perfection: and this is the goal towards which development naturally tends. Thus Bonald rejects Rousseau's ideal, which he claims[8] is an appeal to primitivism which fails to differentiate between the "natif" and the "naturel" conditions of society, which are really antithetical:-

> The native state is the savage state, and therefore it is puny and imperfect; either it will be destroyed or civilized. The civilized state is the mature, completed perfect state, and this is the natural state - secure and strong.[9]

8. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, pp. 69-70; Législation primitive, Œuvres I, pp. 200-01.
9. Législation primitive, Œuvres II, p. 86.

The concept of the "noble savage" is, therefore, absurd and impossible; it is a contradiction in terms, concludes Bonald,[10] since the state of nature is the most civilized state of all. And as it is only within society that man can fulfil himself, society is the natural state of man:

> In effect, man belongs to society by natural necessity; and the great mistake that the philosophes of the eighteenth century made was to consider man as an isolated entity, belonging only fortuitously to society. 11

Contrary to Rousseau's belief that the native and natural states are identical, Bonald argues they are antagonistic and are in constant opposition. Rousseau - who commenced by appreciating the truth: that the nature of a being is its perfection - has ended in a fallacy because he mistook the natural state for the native state. In fact, Bonald argues, all Rousseau's errors stem from this original misconception, which enables him to contemplate a state of nature for man which is completely exterior to society and to argue that the latter depraves those who enter into it, - which is false. It also enables him to speak of the family as

10. Ibid, Œuvres I, p. 291.
11. "Des sciences, des lettres et des arts", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p. 364.

the only truly natural society when, in reality, it is merely a primary state in which

> society can no more remain stationary than man can halt in infancy. 12

From Rousseau's original mistaken premise, too, emerges the notion of a natural religion which is, in fact, only the primary form of Christianity, which discloses its true nature in revealed religion. But Rousseau, by confusing the natural state with the primitive state, would have revealed religion return to natural religion, political society to domestic society, and civilized man to a state of barbarism. Rousseau has inverted the natural order and Bonald denounces him:

> Novelist of nature,
> derogator of civilization. 13

Society, claimed Rousseau, is the work of men; it is the product of a contract voluntarily undertaken. Never, never, never, replied Bonald. Society is the work neither of men, nor even of one man, but of nature itself; it is not arbitrary, but necessary:

> Was (the establishment of society) the outcome of force or the result of a contract? Definitely not. The institution of public power was neither voluntary

12. "Sur la Pensée de l'Homme", Mercure de France, Œuvres II, p.86.
13. Ibid, p.87.

> nor forced; it was necessary, which means that it conformed to the nature of social beings, and its causes and origin were perfectly natural. 14

Society, then, is not the outcome of a contract. In fact, Bonald continues, there is no such thing as a social pact or contract in any society - not in political society any more than in religious or domestic society. In the family, no covenant exists between a father and his children

> who are not born of their own volition to a particular man rather than to another. 15

And in religious society there is no voluntary compact between God and man. It follows that in political society also, no contract exists between authority and subjects: neither preceding nor following the institution of power. Not prior to the establishment of the latter, since society is not called upon to choose between admitting or rejecting power

> because society cannot exist without power, 16

- power is not arbitrary, it is necessary, which means it is natural. Even Rousseau's argument for a social contract implies this, according to Bonald, for in

14. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p. 55.
15. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p. 51.
16. Ibid, p. 52.

submitting themselves to the decision of the man who proposed the contract, the people are acknowledging an authority. In effect,

> they have conceded their obedience before they possess their master. 17

Nor is a pact entered into after the establishment of authority, because a contract, to be valid, is a commitment between equals; while between power and subject the natural relationship is one of dependence. Rousseau's concept of the social contract Bonald rejects on the grounds that it provides neither basis for power nor incentive for duties:

> It destroys society, by making of power only a contract revocable at will; it degrades men by making of his duties only a reckoning between his personal interests. 18

History substantiates what reason has proved: that society does not emerge from a social contract. No matter how far into the past one looks, history reveals men in society, acquiescent of authority: and this authority, by virtue of the physical and moral superiority which is responsible for its ascendancy, naturally asserts itself over the individuals who, by

17. Ibid.
18. "Des sciences, des lettres et des arts", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.365.

their spontaneous obedience, have rendered themselves subjects. If anyone can be said to have "formed society",[19] therefore, it is the man whom nature has endowed with the qualities of leadership. Were it not so, society would remain for ever merely an agglomeration of individuals - a supposition which Bonald detects with alacrity in every aspect of eighteenth-century thought. Of Adam Smith he writes:

> Adam Smith has dwelt at length upon the nature and causes of the "wealth of nations"... but what he has treated is the wealth of certain individuals - land-owners, traders, industrialists, bankers, etc., and not of the wealth of nations, which is quite a different thing... A nation is like a society, and that is something other than an aggregation of individuals. [20]

Bonald does not deny that the people may at times believe that they have chosen their leader, but points out that, in fact, this does not mean that their decision is either arbitrary or independent:-

> People never make a choice without a reason, which is in itself a law - often the

19. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.56.
20. "De la Richesse des Nations", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.584.

> most imperative of all -
> the law of circumstances. 21

As it is not the product of a contract effected by man, society (whose pre-requisite is authority) would thus appear to be both necessary and natural, since it is derived from the very nature of the beings among whom it is established.

> There are (wrote Bonald)
> laws which govern colonies
> of ants and of bees; so why
> should one suppose that there
> are not similar laws for human
> society and that the latter is
> left to the fortuity of man's
> inventiveness? 22

The duty of the philosopher is to discover and to expound these laws which derive from nature. This is the fundamental truth that Bonald discovered in the writings of Rousseau: that there is a truly natural order determined by natural law. All that was necessary for happiness (or so it seemed to Rousseau and his disciples) was to discover and to propagate the laws laid down by a benevolent deity, and to obey them. This was the Enlightenment's substitute for Christianity. But it was precisely this "rational" creed with which Louis de Bonald, the sworn opponent of the Enlightenment, hoped to persuade all men back

21. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, pp. 52-53.
22. Pensées, Œuvres VI, p. 55.

to the untrodden ways of Christianity.

To Bonald, with his obsession for symmetry and unity, it appeared that Rousseau, while recognizing the perfection of natural law, was violating its authority, which must necessarily be absolute. For one consequence of the theory of a social contract is that the members of the social group may modify at will the laws which govern them - even improve upon them, according to Rousseau. Rousseau, applying this principle unreservedly, even attempted to draw up constitutions, first for Poland and, later, Corsica. But this is treachery to the concept of innate ideas, declared Bonald,[23] who quoted as his watch-word the lines:

> A people which has lost
> its mores, by seeking to
> give itself written laws,
> is imposing upon itself the
> onerous necessity of writing
> everything, even its mores. [24]

The laws which are of nature cannot be modified without damaging the natural order of society. The anarchy and chaos of Revolutionary France stem from man's attempt to usurp the role of the only legitimate legislator - nature[25] thus substituting for the general will their personal will. Society is the work of nature, not of human legislation: to fabricate it is futile, if not

23. Théorie du pouvoir, Bk.VI, Chap.III, Œuvres III, p.314 ff.
24. Œuvres I, frontispiece.
25. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.317.

actually dangerous:

> One cannot write nature into existence; to write the constitution is to reverse it; just as to decree the existence of God is to destroy faith. 26

But nature will have her revenge, predicts Bonald, and from the evil excesses the fallacy which provoked this state of imperfection will be expelled and society will revert to its natural constitution. Thus revolutions (and the French Revolution is proof of this) are really natural and salutary crises by which nature

> repudiates the dangerous principles which a debilitated authority has permitted to encroach, and restores society to its original health and vigour. 27

Did not Rousseau himself recognize this important truth when he wrote:

> If the legislator, mistaking his purpose, establishes a principle contrary to that which arises from the nature of things, the State will not cease to be troubled until such time as this principle is destroyed or changed and invincible nature has asserted her dominion 28

26. Ibid, p.114.
27. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.19.
28. Rousseau, op.cit. (Vaughan) Vol.II, pp.62-63; Bonald, Œuvres III, frontispiece.

- which Bonald later had inscribed in the Théorie du pouvoir?

Another conclusion which, for Bonald, emerged from the theory of the social contract was, of course, the sovereignty of the people: what is established in the interests of all must necessarily be established by all, wrote Rousseau. All authority therefore emanates from the people who are the sovereign will. Not at all, argued Bonald. Sovereignty lies with God and is the expression of his will - or (what amounts to the same thing) the will of nature, which is synonymous with the general will of society. The concept of the general will is also one which Bonald has borrowed from his arch-adversary Rousseau, only to invert it to the detriment of the other's argument.[29] Bonald contends that the general will must not in any circumstances be mistaken for the particular will of one man, which must necessarily be subject to self-interest and passion. Nor, however, should it be equated with the sum of the particular wills, because

> The will of the entire population, even if it were unanimous, is only the sum of the particular wills, and cannot be the general will. [30]

Wills are essentially conflicting and destructive and can never be united in harmony for the purpose of

29. See Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.35 ff.
30. Ibid, p.35.

conservation.

> ... the principal political error of J.J.Rousseau... was to confound the "general" will with the "collective" will... an error perpetrated by Condillac who, by mistaking "general" ideas for "collective" ideas, invoked atheism, just as Jean-Jacques invited anarchy. 31

What, then, is the general will to which Bonald refers?

> It is the nature or the natural tendency of a being to fulfil its purpose. 32

This purpose, for society, is the preservation of social beings, which is at the same time superior to each individual and to the aggregation of individuals: it is the will of the social "corps" - the will of nature itself - that is, the will of God.

It is true, admits Bonald, that Rousseau, even though he raised

> the edifice of the social contract on this hopeless ambiguity between the popular will and the general will, 33

actually did distinguish between the general will and the particular will. In fact, the author of the Contrat social recognized, before Bonald himself, that the

31. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.75, noteI.
32. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.36.
33. Ibid.

general will is not simply the will of all:

> There is often considerable difference between the will of all and the general will. The latter is concerned only with the common interest, the former with interests that are partial, being itself but the sum of individual wills. 34

But Rousseau aroused the wrath of Bonald by appearing to abandon this truth by placing the general will with the popular will.

> That Will be general, it is not always necessary that it be unanimous, though it is necessary that every vote cast should be counted. Any deliberate exclusion breaks the general nature of the decision. 35

And what, objects Bonald, will happen if the voices are numerically equally opposed - where does the general will lie then?[36] Voted out of existence; and not only that, Bonald continues, but suppose all opposing voices, save one, mutually cancel each other, is the general will then really the will of the only outstanding individual? If so, it is a particular will. And Rousseau's contradiction abnegates itself.

If, then, the general will is quite distinct from

34. Rousseau, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 42.
35. Ibid, p. 40 (note).
36. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, pp. 84-85.

the will of each and from the will of all, it is not in this consultation of the people that it is necessary to look, wrote Bonald;

> Where all the particular wills, loves and forces necessarily wish to dominate, it is imperative that a general will, a general love, and a general force dominate... 37

and for this it is necessary to seek higher, beyond the transient caprice of individuals to the steadfastness and immutability of God. To vest sovereignty in the people - in the particular - is to free individuals from all restraint, from all sense of obligation, and to legitimize their every decision. Jurieu, who was one of the precursors of the doctrine of the social contract and of popular sovereignty, once wrote that

> the people is the only authority which has no need of reason to validate its acts; 38

which means, says Bonald, that if the people wish to destroy themselves, there will be no sanctions to control or prevent them. This can only be avoided by committing sovereignty to a will and a force which is stronger than man's. And this - which the philosophes rightly term nature - is none other than God.[39]

37. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.34.
38. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.81.
39. Du Divorce, Œuvres IV, p.450.

So that, having borrowed from his antagonist the concept of natural law, Bonald renounces its every tenet; the nature of man himself, the nature of society, the nature of the laws, the role of the legislator, and the depository of authority in the State, even the nature of nature, Rousseau has misconstrued, claimed Bonald. That which he deemed to be natural was, in effect, unnatural; for that which is truly natural is supernatural.

To Rousseau - traitor to Locke's refutation of innate ideas - what was natural was inherent; but the eighteenth-century book of nature was open for all to read, Christians and atheists alike; and Bonald found nothing in its pages to contradict such a definition. He agreed that what was natural was inherent, but he imposed the added condition that what was natural was also divine:

> ... natural, perfect, divine -
> they are synonymous terms. 40

Rousseau's error does not lie in the notion of innate ideas itself which, wrote Bonald, has had a long existence:

> Plato, the fathers of the
> Church, and the medieval
> schoolmasters have sustained
> it... Rousseau returned to it
> when he said:'What God wanted
> man to do, he did not make known

40. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.358.

> to him through another man,
> but told him himself, and
> wrote it at the bottom of
> his heart.' 41

But Rousseau was mistaken in believing that innate ideas are the property of the individual; rather, said Bonald, they are social and absolute, because

> The Scriptures established
> the word of God for all men
> absent or present, for all
> times and in all places; 42

so that when Bonald, at the turn of the nineteenth century, wrote

> The time has come to offer
> to mankind the map of the
> moral universe, and the
> theory of society, 43

he was envisaging a map of Christendom only, a map which would not accommodate the Brave New World of the Enlightenment. For Bonald's map of the moral universe was to be traced, not in the secret recesses of the human heart (for who could count the thoughts which arise in the heart of man?)[44] but in the Scriptures.

* * * * * *

Taine's criticism of the Traditionalist school of Bonald was that its work was to refute rather than to

41. Ibid, p.169.
42. Ibid, p.335.
43. Ibid, p.203.
44. Ibid, p.153.

inquire.[45] Almost a truism, the foregoing would suggest, and yet, in fact, it is only a partial truth. Certainly Bonald's work began in denial but, as it was elaborated, it developed into a political theory no less reasoned and comprehensive than the theses it set out to refute. So it was with Bonald's confrontation with Rousseau. Bonald proposed that the Contrat social be retitled:

> Handbook for the use of
> societies to dislodge them
> from their natural inclinations [46]

- an appellation which, in its mordant irony, epitomizes all Bonald's animosity towards Rousseau and, just as clearly, the degree of his commitment. Bonald was acknowledging, as Rousseau before him, a universal natural order against which to measure the contemporary order of things.

> We should distinguish
> between the variety in
> human nature and that
> which is essential to it, [47]

wrote Rousseau, and Bonald, taking this advice, began:-

> There exists one constitution,
> and one only, for political
> society, one and only one for
> religious society; the conjunction
> of these two constitutions and of
> these two societies constitutes
> civil society; both constitutions

45. Taine, Les philosophes français du dix-neuvième siècle. (Paris, 1860), p.305.
46. Théorie du Pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.53.
47. Eloise (1810) I,4;
Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (Mass., 1964) p.87.

> result from the nature of the members of each society, as necessarily as weight arises from the nature of matter. These two constitutions are necessary metaphysically speaking - that is, they could not be other than they are without conflicting with the nature of the members of each society. 48

- the opening articles of Bonald's first work, which pose immediately the natural and necessary character of the social complex, for Bonald, as much religious as political.

From this principle, which he maintains is indisputable, Bonald reasons that it is not possible to treat society without speaking of man, nor to speak of man without going beyond him to God. It is thus from God himself that society emanates; and, by a series of propositions which he deduces consecutively, Bonald posits in turn that God surpasses all understanding and must, therefore, represent infinite wisdom; that God recognizes himself with infinite knowledge; that God loves himself with infinite love; that God wills his own preservation or happiness with an infinite will; that God is able to preserve himself by an infinite and omnipotent force; that God is therefore infinite will, infinite love and infinite

48. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.9.

force.[49] In love of self lies the instinct for the reproduction of the species; in love of these creatures - or created ones - lies the instinct for their preservation. Now, all beings must be cast in the image of their creator: so this is man, similar to God (similar, but not equal - cardinal distinction). Man is therefore, like God, intelligence, will, love and force. Intelligence, since he recognizes God, "or projects him in his thought"[50]; love, because he loves God and wishes to preserve the knowledge of God; and force, since he is able to retain God (he preserves God inasmuch as he makes of God the subject of his thoughts and the object of his love). God and man are thus linked by these relationships of will, love and force, which means that man's nature derives both from the nature of the finite (as the created being) and from the nature of the infinite (the creator). These relationships are therefore necessary, which means - "such that they could not be otherwise without conflicting with the nature of their being". Thus, and according even to Rousseau's frame of reference -

> Natural (being synonymous with necessary) relationships must coincide with political laws

- they are laws.[51] Thus, laws exist between God and

49. Ibid, p. 24.
50. Ibid, p. 26.
51. Ibid, p. 27.

man, laws (or necessary relationships) derived from the nature of God and man. Thus, finally, there is between God and man a society which is the natural, religious society called natural religion.

Being, like God, will, love and force, man, like God, wishes to reproduce and to preserve others moulded in the image of himself; just as with God, in whom the love of self is the drive which produces similar beings, and the love of these beings the instinct to preserve them, so Bonald defines the natural desire for reproduction and preservation in the human context. Laws also exist therefore, he continues,[52] between man and man, derived from their physical and moral nature: relationships of shared will and of reciprocal love directed towards the common goal - reproduction and preservation. This society based upon man's necessary relationships with his own is the natural, physical society - the family.

Whether physical or religious, however, society may be either natural or public. Natural, it features the family and private worship; public, it is the State and revealed religion. Always it may be defined as a union of similar identities for their mutual aims of reproduction and preservation. But of these two goals,

52. Ibid, p. 29.

it is especially the first - reproduction - which is realized in natural societies (physical or religious). Too often, in practice, love of self supersedes love of others - both God and men. However, man should love God more than all other beings, and he should love his neighbour as himself, since all men, made in God's image, are equally good and, therefore, equally lovable. On the other hand, the mutual preservation of beings is assured only in the public or general phase of society: in revealed religion, where natural religion, accomplished or generalized, will be the element, and in political society, in which the family will be the unit. It is only then that the "general love" of others overrides the "particular love" of self. In fact, as Rousseau's manifesto states:

> If the establishment of societies has been made necessary by the antagonism that exists between particular interests, it has been made possible by the conformity that exists between these same interests. 53

Thus general will, general love and general force form the constitution of political society. But if it is to be general it must be common to all - which renders it both singular and public; as Rousseau

53. Rousseau, op. cit., II, pp. 39-40;
Bonald, Œuvres III, p. 34.

expressed it:

> As long as several men
> regard themselves as
> comprising only one group,
> they can have only one will,
> which is related to their
> mutual preservation...
> General will cannot be based
> upon a particular aim. 54

Will is manifested externally, for Bonald, in the laws, which are the expression of the general will; love, in the sovereign-power, who personifies society or the fellow-creature in general in the eyes of each man in particular; force, in the "corps" or the men who labour, on whose behalf the action of power is exercised. General will, or the will of society (that is, the will of God himself, which is nature), general power, which is the agent of this will, and general force, which is the action of the general power, together form the constitution of Bonald's society in abstract. This society, concludes Bonald,[55] was born as the universe: of a will directing a love acting by a force. In this trinity of elements, in this rapport between a will which commands, a love which guides and a force which executes, Bonald perceives as in a mirror the reflection of the fundamental dogma of the Christian religion.

54. Quoted by Bonald, Œuvres III, p.37.
55. Ibid, p.43.

From these principles emerges the first natural law of society: namely, the unity of power. Society, claims Bonald, will very quickly destroy itself if authority is shared among many; although, in fact, even when it appears to be in the hands of many, it is really the property of one, of the strongest, the most able, the most scheming, or the misguided. It is a formula dear to Bonald, and he proffers it as an axiom:

> Where all men wish to dominate with equal will but unequal force, it is necessary that one alone should dominate lest all be destroyed. 56

From the unity of power Bonald deduces his second natural law: the perpetuity of power. The "homme-pouvoir", the monarch, must be either immortal or perpetual; for, if he were to languish, the exercise of the general authority of society would cease: which means, Bonald elaborates, the general will, preserver of society, would be left without the complement of authority, and the general force without power of direction. Now, will without authority is not free will, and force without power is not directed force. Therefore, Bonald cautions,[57] society bereft of will and devoid of authority leaves itself susceptible to

56. Ibid, p. 52.
57. Ibid, p. 75.

blind, unbridled force. The concept of the general will demands that the succession of power must not be interrupted, even temporarily; power must be perpetual. And power can be secured in perpetuity only through the hereditary transmission of authority vested in one family.

No less fundamental than the perpetuity of authority is the continuity of the agents of public force: another natural law which Bonald regards as sequential. From the moment, in effect, that the general will (which is the innate desire to achieve perfection) becomes perpetual, and consequently its power of attaining it, perpetual, its force must be likewise; for authority can no more exist without force than a being can exist devoid of the will to realize its purpose.

> Force is action; action presupposes agents or ministers. Therefore the agents or ministers of the public, general or social (synonymous terms) force must be perpetual. 58

Just as, in the case of power, permanence is guaranteed by succession within the family, so for the agents of public force it is ensured by the hereditary transmission of public functions and social professions.

58. Ibid, pp. 78-79.

Fundamental constitutional law expressed by the relationship of general will, general power and general force; fundamental political law of the unity and perpetuity of power and the permanence of social distinctions, - such are, in brief, the natural laws which Bonald formulates in the early chapters of the Théorie du pouvoir. Mere presentation, however, was not enough; the pragmatic approach to nature which he had learnt from Rousseau determined that his principles must be both reasoned and applied, and his tone didactic. So that, having introduced his theory of natural law, Bonald does not hesitate to repeat it and, in fact, the balance of the Théorie du pouvoir and, indeed, his entire writings, are really variations upon this theme, frequently in identical terms. To demonstrate that these principles do represent the natural order, to illustrate them and to justify them by the example of ancient and modern societies, to follow their influence with regard to duration, prosperity, perfection, national character and government involves the rest of his early work.

The principles postulated in the Théorie du pouvoir are both repeated and developed in the works which follow: in condensed form (Bonald says so himself)[59] and denuded of all historical application, in the

59. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.35.

Essai analytique and Divorce, systematized almost to the point of a mathematical treatise (historical documents by way of alleviation and support) in the Législation primitive, and in a new and final abridgement in the Principe constitutif. There is repetition in so far as the expressions general will, general love or power, and general force recur continually; but there is also development, or at least discontinuity, as these terms, in his later works, give place to those of power, minister and subject; in their former connotation the sovereign was the will of God; the minister, the monarch or agent of this will; and the subject, the monarch's instrument or agent of action. But in the later works there is no longer the concept of the sovereign in the capacity of general will; instead, as though he wishes to consider only the visible elements of society (the "personnes sociales", as he refers to them), Bonald treats the power as the personification of society, the minister as the agent of the king's will, and the subject as the object of the will of the latter and the action of the former. From society in abstract, from the soul, emerge the corporeal and sensible manifestations.

It is in the Législation primitive[60] that the concept of this "trinity of social persons" is presented

60. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, pp. 342 ff.

with the greatest detail and rigour. Here it is deduced from a trinity more vast which embraces the entire universe, the trinity of cause, means and effect. Bonald discerns everywhere the image of these elements and patterns: in God and his relations with the world, in religion and its fundamental dogma, in the family, in the State, and in the constitution of man.

From his theory of language, which he integrates at this point with his theory of society, Bonald deduces that man, having necessarily received speech from a superior being, and consequently aware of him and of himself, is cognizant, therefore, of the most universal cause, God, and the most universal effect, man. But the knowledge of these two extremes does not afford total insight into the nature of man's relationship with God. A mean, an intermediary, is necessary who, proportioned by the perfection of the one and the infirmity of the other, establishes a connection between them. And the nature of this connection may be expressed as a proportion: namely, the cause is to the mean as the mean is to the effect; which, translated, signifies that the cause operates upon the mean in order to determine it, as the mean operates upon the effect to produce it. The terms, cause, mean and effect, comprehend all beings; the proportion which they form embraces all relationships. There is no order apart from these terms and this proportion.

From the universal natural order, it is possible to proceed to particular applications where the terms, cause, mean and effect assume particular connotations; and the general formula represents particular relationships. Now the general world order may be subdivided into the physical world and the moral, or social, world. In the first, the cause is the primary source, the mean - movement, the effect - matter. In the social-cum-moral world of will and action, cause, mean and effect adopt the general titles of power, minister and subject, and the appropriate cognomens of particular societies: in political society, king, nobility and subjects; in domestic society, father, mother and children, and so on. In every society, in conjunction with the social persons so adeptly classified, are the natural and necessary relationships of their association; so that the king is to the nobility as the latter are to the subjects, the father to the mother likewise, the middle-man always partaking of the character of the two extremes.

For Bonald these natural phenomena and natural laws are demonstrated in the family, the State, the universe, religion, and even man; but to avoid unnecessary repetition and to determine the points of convergence and divergence with the nature of which Rousseau wrote, one society only will be analyzed - the State.

* * * * * *

The State is descended from, and is the natural projection of, the primary society - the family. One is a society for the production and preservation of individuals; the other, a society for the production and preservation of families, wrote Bonald,[61] taking his cue from the "partial truths" of the Contrat social, which states:

> The oldest form of society - and the only natural one - is the family ... We may therefore, if we wish, regard the family as the basic model of all political associations. The ruler is the father writ large: the people are, by analogy, his children... 62

The family - (it is always the landed family which Bonald has in mind, because it alone is independent) - the family forms of itself a society naturally independent of all other families in its persons and its properties. But such are the passions of men and the force of circumstances that this natural independence is often challenged by another family. Whence arise differences, divisions, struggles, finally a state of war. This state of affairs would inevitably lead to the destruction

61. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p. 54.
62. Rousseau, op. cit., II, p. 24.

of families

> if there were not raised above them, by virtue of the general and necessary laws for the preservation of the human race, one man who has the power of submitting to a general order of duties, that is, to the laws of a single constitution and to the action of a single administration, these partial and divided societies. 63

Thus emerges the general and public state of society, which is composed of many particular or domestic societies.

This passage from the domestic state to the public state is effected quite naturally. It may indeed seem surprising that between families until then independent, that between men, formerly total strangers, a public power could establish itself and gain acceptance. It may even appear to be the outcome of force or the result of a contract:

> Since no man has natural authority over his fellows, and since might can produce no right, the only foundation left for legitimate authority in human society is agreement, 64

wrote Rousseau. But Bonald denies such possibilities vehemently. The idea of the voluntary formation of a society without social distinctions is anathema to him.

63. Législation primitive, Œuvres II, pp. 5-6.
64. Rousseau, op. cit., II, p. 27.

> Voilà le pouvoir -
> Voilà les ministres -
> Voilà les sujets - 65

- natural and necessary, they emerge in all societies, where they comprise the natural, necessary, hence unique, constitution:

> ... in every society, even those in decline, there are no other ranks, no other relationships, no other functions. 66

The monarch, who wills and who acts for the preservation of society, represents power. His will is law and his action government. He himself wills; but acts through his ministers. The latter serve to inform his will and to put into execution his action on behalf of the subjects for their mutual interest.[67] There can be little doubt that Bonald borrowed this "will-force-action" theme from Rousseau, who defines the relationship of the ministry to the sovereign (albeit, in his scheme, the people) in identical terms:

> The force, therefore, of the body politic cannot be exerted save through an appropriate agent who translates it into action in accordance with instructions issued by the general will, acts as a channel of communication

65. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.56.
66. Ibid.
67. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.209.

> between the State and the sovereign, and performs for public ends the same function as that fulfilled in the individual man by the union of mind and body... this is the ministry. 68

And, he continues,

> Those who maintain that the act by which a people submit to their rulers is not a contract have much right on their side. It is, strictly speaking, nothing but a "commission"... the alienation of which, being incompatible with the body social, is contrary to the whole object for which it has been established. 69

The ministry is the agent of the general will and represents the action of the general will, which is government, writes Rousseau;[70] and it may be likened to the link which unites the extremes of a continuous proportion of which the mean proportional is the ministry or government. The latter receives from the sovereign the orders which it passes on to the people. The theorem is a familiar one to students of Bonald; and would suggest that the source of Bonald's algebraic formulas should be sought not in the pettifogging scholasticism of the Middle Ages, but in the very century to which he chronologically belongs.

68. Rousseau, op.cit., II, p.65.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.

Just as domestic power acts for the benefit of the children, so public power is directed towards the good of the subjects, which is its raison d'être: it is a service - just that, and nothing more. Power is love, claimed Bonald, but Rousseau thought otherwise; whereas in the family, he wrote,

> the father's love for his children is sufficient reward for the care he has lavished upon them; in the State, the pleasure of commanding others takes its place, since the ruler is not in a relation of love to his people. 71

But power complexes have no place in Bonald's natural order. Does not Holy Writ say that the Son of God came not to command, but to serve? Indeed, claims Bonald,

> The ministers are more subject than the subjects themselves, 72

since they are first and foremost subjects themselves and, as such, subject to all the common laws of society, as well as being subject to the special services which are incumbent upon their rank: and these become more arduous the higher the position in the social hierarchy. The term "serving" or "service" - does it not designate, "in all Christian languages", the highest political, judicial and military functions? demands Bonald. It is therefore most aptly applied to the most elevated rank

71. Ibid, p. 24.
72. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, pp. 88-89.

of all - power.

Where does power originate? In God, replies Bonald: omnis potestas ex Deo;[73] sovereignty is in God alone, and power is only the delegate of this sovereignty. All power comes from God, echoes Rousseau,

> Certainly, but so do all ailments. Are we to conclude from such an argument that we are never to call in the doctor? 74

Bonald is by no means oblivious to the problem posed by Rousseau but considers that, by equating "divine right" and "divine power" with "natural right" and "natural power", the matter is resolved. By what means, Bonald asks, is it possible to distinguish the power which emanates from the sovereignty of God, and an assumed power which is only deputed by the sovereignty of man? And replies:

> I mean by power which emanates from the sovereignty of God and conforms to his will, the power constituted on and by political laws... laws which are the result of the natural relationships between man and society, consequently the expression of the Supreme Being, creator of men, and author of the natural relationships which

73. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.41.
74. Rousseau, op.cit., II, p.27.

> preserve them. For human society is natural to man..., it is thus inherent in the will of the source of all nature. 75

And reserving for the power of religious society the epithet of divine, Bonald writes:

> Let us call the political power natural when it is constituted or based on natural laws; for they establish only what is in conformity with nature. 76

This response reiterates Bonald's assertion that God and nature are synonymous terms. Power derives from God, in all aspects which conform to nature, as, inversely, where it is contrary to nature, it derives from man; sentiments which call to mind the opening words of Emile:

> Everything is good as it comes from the hand of the Creator. Everything becomes evil in the hands of man.

And in the Contrat social, Rousseau laments:

> All justice is from God... Did we but know how to receive Heaven's ordinances direct, then we should stand in need neither of government nor of law. 77

75. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.90.
76. Ibid, p.91.
77. Rousseau, op.cit., II, p.48.

But Bonald, secure in the knowledge that, when Cicero appealed to authority, he proclaimed, not "it is just", nor "it is natural", but "it is written",[78] continues his self-interrogation. Power - speaking in the abstract - is it held by divine right? - "Oui, sans doute" - he replies,

> because domestic authority is held by natural right, and public power by necessary right, and because the author of nature is the author of all the necessary conditions of existence, and because he could not destroy the conditions necessary for the survival of beings without destroying the beings themselves. 79

Moreover, Bonald, moving from the sphere of theory to that of application, reproaches Mme de Staël for speaking of the doctrine of divine right,

> as if those who profess it believe that the divinity had, by special revelation, appointed a particular family to govern a State, or that the State belongs to him in the same way as a flock belongs to its master. 80

Unquestionably, the theory of divine right, in Bonald's hands, loses its mystical character and assumes a very definite naturalistic bias.

78. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.335.
79. Pensées, Œuvres VI, pp.188-189.
80. "Observations sur l'ouvrage de Mme la baronne de Staël", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.657.

Political authority necessarily has the same characteristics as its theoretical counterpart. First of all, it is <u>one</u>; and it is precisely because it can not be a "matter for division" that it is such a matter of division among men, contends Bonald:

> It is the seamless coat
> which cannot be divided
> but instead is drawn by lots,
> and always among the soldiers... 81

The functions of power may be multiple, according as its action is applied to a diversity of objects; but its essence is <u>one</u>. If there were two monarchs, there would be in reality two societies: wherever power is divided, factions develop, which are miniature societies in the heart of the true society - the State, luring the latter to its destruction. The Master himself warned that "power divided against itself cannot stand"; although his meaning may easily be misinterpreted, cautions Bonald.[82] Even civil war, he writes, does not constitute power divided against itself, since each party claims power, and claims it in its entirety. The division of power to which Bonald objects is the legal division of the unity of power - the actual contemporaneous working of two or more powers; it is this simultaneous division of power which is contrary to the nature of

81. <u>Principe constitutif</u>, <u>Œuvres</u> VIII, pp.62-63; John 19 - 23, 24.
82. "Méditations politiques tirées de l'Evangile", <u>Œuvres</u> VIII, p.164.

society and which must result in its destruction. Moreover, and in spite of appearances to the contrary, unity of power exists even in those States where it would appear to be most absent - in democracies where the law of number reigns. Indeed, Bonald was forced to admit that, in his battle against the advocates of the division of power, he found in his habitual democratic adversary staunch support. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in no uncertain terms, maintained that sovereignty is - and must be - indivisible:

> For the same reason that sovereignty is inalienable, so, too, it is indivisible. For either the will is general or it is not, 83

wrote Rousseau; - Bonald's contention also, and he, in fact, cites the Contrat social in confirmation:

> It is said that Japanese conjurors will cut a child in pieces in full view of the audience, and then, casting the fragments into the air, bring them to earth again all duly assembled into a living infant. Such, or almost such, are the tricks performed by our modern men of politics. The social Corps is first dismembered with an adroitness which would do credit to a country fair, and then reassembled, no one knows how. 84

83. Rousseau, op.cit., II, p.40.
84. Ibid, p.41;
Bonald, Œuvres III, p.314.

Even in democratic States, Bonald elaborates,[85] power lies with the most unified group who have in their midst the unseen voter: the power of circumstance. Also, most popular States elect a chief magistrate, who is not, to be sure, a permanent power, but who nevertheless remains an image and fiction of the unity of power. Is this not sufficient proof that the unity of power is in the nature of man and the needs of society - that it is natural and necessary?

Subject to God alone, power must be independent of man; for once power becomes dependent it is no longer power. Power and dependence, wrote Bonald, on one occasion, are as mutually exclusive as round and square.[86] But independence presupposes wealth which, for Bonald, means property. The monarch must be a proprietor, which means, on Bonald's terms, that the monarch must be a land-owner; without landed property ownership there is no political independence, since all other wealth, mobile or commercial, is dependent upon men and circumstances.

Again, the monarch's power must be definitive and absolute; if he cannot exact obedience, he will not be independent, and he will not be monarch, since any violation in itself indicates the presence of a power

85. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.85.
86. "Observations sur l'ouvrage de Mme la baronne de Staël", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.654.

mightier than the monarch himself. But there must on no account be any confusion between absolute power ("a much-maligned term") and arbitrary power.[87] Absolute and arbitrary - like natural and native - are, for Bonald, antonyms: while the former indicates the absence of all factors extraneous to the state of nature, the latter implies total emancipation from restraint, where man is entirely dependent upon the will or caprice of man. Absolute power is independent of the men over whom it is exercised: thus, a father's authority exists quite independently of his children, the authority of a master is independent of his servants, and the authority of the king is independent of his subjects. But arbitrary power is independent of the laws by virtue of which it governs: a case in point is the despot who rules tyrannically; another, for Bonald, is the sovereign people, since, following the definition so often cited by Rousseau, it always has the right to change the laws, even to improve upon them. If, argues Rousseau,

> in each State there is only one good method of regulating it, the people who have discovered that method ought to keep to it. But if the established order is bad, why should we regard as basic those very laws which themselves constitute the obstacle to its being good? Besides, in any case,

87. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.64.

> it is always open to a people to change their laws, even when they are good. For if they like to injure themselves, by what right can they be prevented from doing so? 88

By the right of absolute authority, retorts Bonald, whose natural duty it is to prevent such unnatural, arbitrary acts. Absolute power secures obedience by the natural order of things; arbitrary power by compulsion. One is synonymous with liberty, and the other with tyranny. Rousseau, however, realized the difficulty of sustaining such subtle distinctions in reality, where

> bad men do mount the throne, 89

and, anticipating Bonald's reply, wrote:

> The remedy,(some) say, is to give unmurmuring obedience. God, in his anger, sends bad kings to a country, and they must be endured as the scourge of Heaven. Such sentiments are, no doubt, edifying, but I have a feeling that they are better suited to the pulpit than to books on politics. 90

Doubtless, Bonald admits from his pulpit, it is possible that absolute power may deteriorate into arbitrary power and govern in violation of the laws which nature traces

88. Rousseau, op.cit., II, p.63.
89. Ibid, II, p.81.
90. Ibid.

for those over whom authority is exercised. This is why the first law of monarchy must be to defend the subjects against oppression, even if this entails violating the political and social laws. But, continues Bonald, it does not follow, that if the king does violate these laws, he should then, as the philosophes claim, be deferred to the judgment of his subjects. This would be to reduce his power to the dependence of men, and therefore to deny it. He may be judged only by God, supreme judge of kings, who punishes them through their own shortcomings. This will be, for the subjects - as even Bonald acknowledges - a slim guarantee. And so Bonald is forced to admit the right of popular action, which he calls passive resistance, as opposed to active resistance.[91]

The latter is revolt: it is peculiar to despotic and popular governments; it is only to be expected where wills are opposed to wills and powers to powers. Passive resistance, on the other hand, resembles the force of inertia which the subjects may oppose to the monarch. It is difficult indeed to perceive the difference between Bonald's "force of inertia" and Rousseau's "unmurmuring obedience" but Bonald hastens to clarify. Passive resistance has nothing in common with passive obedience to which the enemies of absolute power have

91. "Observations sur l'ouvrage de Mme la baronne de Staël", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.657.

attempted to liken it, he continues; in fact, it is just the opposite. Passive obedience means absolute and unreserved submission; it is based upon fear and, as often as not, hatred; it is imposed by violence; it is the natural outcome of tyranny (tyranny either of one or of many). Active obedience is enlightened; it is attendant upon advice or even remonstrances; it is based upon affection and respect; it belongs properly to the monarchy. Active obedience and passive resistance are always found together, as inversely passive obedience breeds active resistance. They both represent the limits of power, on the one hand - of absolute power; on the other - of arbitrary power. For, arbitrary or absolute, power is always limited: there is no such thing as unlimited power in Bonald's scheme of things, not even in God, whose action upon the universe is limited by the nature of his own creations.

Singular, independent, definitive, and absolute - power must also be perpetual.[92] The death or suspension of power will herald the end of society, since a society without power is no longer a society. To be perpetual, power must be, in practice, continually and physically present in society, in order to rule its movements and to direct its action; if not, for want of a legislating and regulating power, society will be given over to

92. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.65.

disorder, and from disorder it will not be slow to decline into despotism, which is the return of power - but in negative form - no longer ministers, subjects and legitimate authority, but instead a despot, sycophants and slaves. An unnatural and unhealthy state of affairs, which Bonald, no less than Rousseau, regards as a prelude to revolution. Once the natural order has been disrupted, wrote Rousseau, a state of imbalance is created, and

> then disorder will be substituted for the rule of law, power and will will cease to act in concert, and the State, entering upon a phase of dissolution, will fall either into despotism or into anarchy. 93

But, both would add - their aspirations fixed upon antipodean Utopias - it is only

> until such time as invincible nature has asserted her dominion.

Alexander Pope expressed, perhaps better than any other, the confident optimism of these philosophers

> (Who looked) thro' Nature up to Nature's God,
> (Where) God and Nature link'd the gen'ral frame,
> And bade Self-love and Social be the same.

Theirs was a Christian creed of natural law:- of God's in his Heaven, all's right with the world - but in the Enlightenment's terms.

93. Rousseau, op.cit., II, pp.65-66.

— SECTION III —

MONTESQUIEU and SOCIETY

The illustrious Montesquieu, wrote Rousseau

> ... has not really treated the principles of political law; he has been content to treat the positive law of established governments; and nothing in the world is more different than these two studies ... it is necessary to know what ought to be in order to judge fairly what is ... 1

- an appraisal with which Bonald concurs wholeheartedly. "A celebrated author", he wrote, referring to Montesquieu,

> ... has treated the "spirit of the laws"; the time has come to treat or to recall "the reason for the laws", and to look less for the spirit of what is, than the reason for what ought to be. 2

Before all else, it is Montesquieu's empirical approach to social studies which antagonises his critics - among them Bonald and Rousseau - who, while agreeing with his

1. Rousseau, The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Vaughan ed.) II, p.147.
2. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.249.

cultural criticism, could not accept defeat. No radical solution, no panacea, no Utopia. The Esprit des lois does not contain one specific recommendation for the ultimate political society. Instead, it suggests a range of possibilities dependent upon specific circumstances, none promising the millenium. Montesquieu deals in terms of the comparative; Bonald in terms of the superlative. And yet it was Louis de Bonald who claimed to share Montesquieu's predilection for the facts, for experience, for the lessons which both thought could be drawn from history. Bonald reproaches Montesquieu[3] for devoting himself to the "is" rather than to the "ought"; thus remaining disinterested and quite satisfied so long as for every society, for every law, for every constitution, he has an explanation. To Bonald, Montesquieu seems impervious to the distinction between what is good and what is bad, between what should be maintained and what rejected. The absurd and the unreasonable - are they to be justified simply on the grounds that they exist and have been explained?

> Relentlessly pursuing
> the spirit of what is,
> and never the reason
> for what should be,

Montesquieu, claimed Bonald,

3. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.17.

> found the reason for
> the most contradictory
> laws, even those which
> defy all reason. 4

Merited or not, the criticism throws light upon Bonald's attitude towards political science - on the confusion in his mind between the empirical and didactic approach to his subject, between the description of forms and social institutions and the search for the means of amending and correcting them.

What is no less abhorrent to Bonald is the fact that anyone should espouse, as Montesquieu did, the very idea of a diversity of laws appertaining to the human race. This misconception overlooks the all-important truth, for Bonald, that human nature is always and everywhere invariable -

> in the tropics as
> in the frigid zones 5

- and that therefore the same laws and the same constitution are appropriate to all. Man, Bonald claimed, has everywhere the same needs and, having the same needs,

> stands in the same
> relationship to his
> fellows and to his
> environment. 6

Thus, everywhere

4. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 201.
5. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 166.
6. Ibid.

> men formed among
> themselves like
> societies. 7

Man everywhere has the same passion to dominate; therefore what is everywhere required is the same curb on his passions; therefore, Bonald concludes, society everywhere must have the same rules, the same laws, the same constitution. Doubtless, there is within the human race variety; but variety only according to how far, by its corruption, a particular group is removed from the natural archetype. However, in reality, there are neither laws nor constitutions for degenerate and corrupt peoples. A constitution worthy of the name exists only for true human nature. And it is to rediscover this constitution, eternal and universal, to rediscover the legislation for all times and all places, the "législation primitive", that the philosopher must set himself, rather than to describe the diversity of customs and then seek explanations for them. Bonald cannot condone in Montesquieu this unmethodical attitude which must concede, with diverse laws, diverse legislators. The very definition of the laws, which Montesquieu coined and Bonald appropriated:

> necessary relationships
> which derive from the
> nature of things - 8

7. Ibid.
8. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.315.

should have prevented him from falling into this error. To say, in effect, that the laws are natural relationships, is to admit that nature alone established these relationships and, consequently, that nature alone can make the laws - which means that to nature alone belongs the legislative power. Far from being able to establish the necessary relationships, the human legislator who interferes

> only retards the work of nature and prevents it from establishing the necessary relationships, by himself introducing what is not natural and necessary. 9

But, in Montesquieu's book, there is divine law and there is human law - civil law, political law, domestic law and canon law - and they are different in their origins, in their objects and in their nature. Such relativist analysis was bound to arouse absolutist criticism, as Montesquieu was aware when, for those of Bonaldian temperament, he wrote:

> In the laws there are certain ideas of uniformity, which sometimes strike great geniuses (for they even affected Charlemagne), but infallibly make an impression on little souls. They discover therein a kind of perfection,

9. Ibid, p. 316.

> which they recognize because
> they cannot help but see it;
> the same authorized weights,
> the same measures in trade,
> the same laws in the State,
> the same religion in all its
> parts. But is this always and
> without exception right? Is
> the evil of changing constantly
> less than that of suffering?
> And does not greatness of genius
> consist rather in distinguishing
> between those cases in which
> uniformity is requisite and
> those in which there is a
> necessity for differences?...
> If the people observe the laws,
> what does it matter whether these
> laws are the same? 10

Clearly, from Bonald's point of view, it is precisely this which does matter; and, if Montesquieu's contemporaries have regarded him as a man of genius, posterity -

> which judges works by their
> effects and opinions by events - 11

will pronounce him only a "man of great intellect", for

> one errs with intellect
> but not with genius. 12

Montesquieu, "founder of political science", writes Bonald, is doomed to ignominy:

10. Montesquieu, Esprit des lois, Bk. XXIX, 18. Œuvres completes, (ed. Masson) Paris, 1950. Vol. I, p. 290.
11. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 200.
12. Ibid.

> since schools always retain something of the turn of mind and character of their founders, ... the disciples of Montesquieu will defend his principles only with the weakness and irresolution that an equivocal doctrine and a timid and indecisive master bequeaths. 13

Montesquieu's very explanation of the spirit of the laws - one of his most original bequests - is, for Bonald, a cause for alarm. To attribute to the physical factors of climate, soil and organic structure the reason for the character and the customs of a people, their laws and their institutions; to make thus of man

> a vegetable product submitted to the properties of the earth and to the action of the air, 14

is to degrade his dignity, justify his vices, ignore his duties, and nullify government. To admit the notion

> that latitude dictates religion and government, 15

is truly to produce a work which is irreligious, anti-social and unscientific. What forms the character, taste and customs of a people are the political and religious institutions, the inherited traditions, as well as education and imitation; but not the climate.

13. Ibid, pp. 201-202.
14. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 360.
15. Ibid, p. 17.

The proof of this is in history, which demonstrates that, with the same climate but different institutions, people develop different characteristics; while identical institutions in contrasting climatic zones foster identical qualities.

A further legacy of the author of the Esprit des lois: the separation of powers, the division into legislative, executive and judicial powers, encounters opposition in Bonald. Apostle of the unity of power, dedicated in all his writibgs to the defence and the restoration of that unity which the Revolution had destroyed, Bonald was bound to deny this tenet of the Esprit des lois. The division of power is, wrote Bonald,

> the fundamental dogma of modern political theory, 16

and the source of all the turmoil of Europe. Against Montesquieu, moreover, Bonald opposes Montesquieu himself. Does he not say that

> the general will is the authority of the State ? 17

Well then, contends Bonald, since the State has only one general will - that of its preservation - it has therefore only one authority. In effect, Montesquieu

16. Ibid, p. 314.
17. Ibid.

has confused two elements which are quite distinct: power and its functions: the latter emerge from the former. The power is singular, but the functions are multiple. Certainly the functions may be delegated to ancillary bodies or functionaries, provided that the authority which delegates remains always the will which commands. If not - if authority itself is divided, if there are manifold authorities within the same State - then the functions which emanate from them will be in a perpetual state of uncertainty and insurrection. This, for Bonald, is tantamount to a permanent state of revolution.

The theory of the separation of powers is moreover stamped, for Bonald, with a characteristic which, quite apart from any other, suffices to render it repugnant: and that is its English origin. Just as (Bonald believes) Rousseau sees only Geneva and measures all his hypothetical states against it, so Montesquieu, after one brief sojourn in England, sees all institutions and governments in relation to their English counterparts. Bonald deplores this loyalty to the other side of the Channel[18] a desire for imitation which he condemns. Bonald's hostility towards the English constitution is augmented by its mixed and ununiform composition; for

18. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 201; and Théorie du pouvoir, Bk. VI, Chap. VII, Œuvres III, p. 351ff.

it unites two forms of government which are, in Bonald's view, antithetical - monarchy and democracy; by this conjunction England, Bonald considers, has written her own obituary.

Thus, with regard to the separation of powers, the diversity of laws and constitutions and the reasons for this diversity, and the influence of the climate on the customs and legislation of nations, Bonald stands opposed to the position adopted by Montesquieu, and in the final reckoning, despite his acknowledged debt, judges him just as severely as he did the author of the Contrat social.

I. Society: Constitution, Government and Administration.

The mathematical principles which, in Bonald, pass for natural laws - whose application is visible in the family, in the State, and in the Church - form, in each case, the constitution. The constitution, then, represents their "manière d'être", which perforce results naturally and necessarily from the members of the society and from the relationships between them. Without doubt, among social members, many relationships may exist, Bonald allows, but not more than one of necessity; which means that for each type of society there is - and there can be - only one constitution, one "manière d'être",

which conforms to nature.[19] There is <u>one</u> constitution for domestic society, <u>one</u> constitution for political society, <u>one</u> constitution for religious society, and <u>one</u> constitution for civil society: it is that which is characterized by unity of authority, social distinctions, hereditary and fixed functions, and a ministry dependent upon authority but independent of the subjects. And this constitution is and must be everywhere the same, because man is everywhere the same, because he has everywhere the same needs, which are not subject to latitude at all. The work of nature, not the fabrication of man, the constitution is immutable.

From the constitution it is possible to derive the government; from the natural laws, the political laws.[20] While the constitution is the very mode of social existence and is symbolized by the organization of power, the government is the form assumed, in each society, by the representation of power.

In constituted societies, the distinction is difficult to perceive and, strictly, does not exist; the external aspect of the government is at one with the constitution: the political laws are the necessary consequence of the constituted laws and are therefore

19. <u>Législation primitive</u>, <u>Œuvres</u> I, p.375.
20. <u>Ibid</u>, p.377.

fundamental. This is to say that there is for each type of society - domestic, political and religious - only one form of government which is natural and necessary, in the same way as there is for each only one natural and necessary constitution. This perfect form is, from Bonald's principles, for the family: monogamy; for the State: monarchy; for religion: Catholicism. As for the constitution, and for the same reason (since it is the work of nature), government has no need of human legislation.

It is otherwise with societies which have either no constitution or an anomalous constitution - the non-constituted or badly constituted societies (it is all one, to Bonald). In these cases, the distinction between the government and the constitution is actual. These societies, which have neither general will, nor general authority, nor distinctions, nor hereditary professions: societies in which all is particular, confused and temporary, do not have, strictly speaking, a constitution. They possess only the outer trappings of society; they have a government without a constitution. This is the case, for example, in the family where, instead of one wife, the husband finds (in the event of polygamy or divorce - which is only a variation of polygamy) the possibility of having an "infinite" number of wives; in the State where authority is vested in an "indefinite number" of people; in those religions

which have neither a unique God nor a single authority: these are simply governments, not constitutions. On any particular topic, according to Bonald, there can be only one necessary conclusion, although there may be any number of unnecessary points of view. It is these unnecessary points of view which are artificially imposed upon non-constituted societies which form the government (whereas a constitution is comprised of the necessary conclusions).[21] And precisely because the basis of government is not necessary, it is not for nature to reveal it - instead, it must be written:

> The laws express no more than opinions, proprieties, and particular wills. It is necessary to be able to recall these opinions, etc. by committing them to paper. 22

In non-constituted societies, where nature is not taken as the legislator, it is necessary to create a legislator:

> There have never been legislators except in those societies which have rejected the legislation of nature. 23

Below the constitution and the government (which are in any case the same in constituted societies), Bonald places the administration, that is, the collection

21. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 261.
22. Ibid, p. 10.
23. Ibid, p. 329.

of regulations which determine the way of life of the members of the society. The constitution, says Bonald, establishes society's "manière d'être"; the administration its "manière d'agir".[24] The constitution fixes the extent of authority; the administration provides the rule of duties: in domestic society, the respect due to the parents and the obedience owed by the children for the direction of their persons and the administration of their common possessions; in religious society, religious observance and ecclesiastical discipline; in the State, the military, judicial, civil, rural and municipal laws; - these are the rules of administration, which are distinct from the constitutional laws.

The constitution could be described as the intrinsic order, the spirit of the society; while the administration is the extrinsic order, the physical form; or, better still, the constitution is the temperament of the State and the administration is the regime. What applies to man applies also to the State, writes Bonald,[25] just as the former may have a good temperament despite a bad regime or a weak temperament under a wise regime, so a State may be strongly constituted but have a deleterious administration, or be badly constituted while possessing a wise administration. For example, France, which was

24. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 375.
25. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p. 61.

the most securely organized of European societies, has often been negligently and inadequately administered. On the other hand, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, "and even England", with weak constitutions, have almost always been fortunate in their judicious administrations. It is the quality of her constitution which has enabled France to emerge victorious from one of the most violent crises which could beset a State; but all their administrative sagacity will not prevent the other nations from foundering. The constituted states are like healthy men able to weather excesses and to resist fatigue and sickness; the non-constituted states are like weak men who know only how to avoid maladies without overcoming them. And in the same way as, for the individual, the discipline must be more severe in proportion as the temperament is weaker, so, for society, the administration must be more vigilant and more stringent where the constitution is defective. A good constitution is thus a guarantee of liberty: it allows some freedom to the individuals and reduces regimentation to a minimum; a bad constitution, by comparison, insists upon scrupulous attention to regulations and thus necessitates a tyrannical and harassing administration. It is Bonald's contention that every society must possess a certain amount of monarchism and that, if it is not in the constitution - where it ought to be - then it must be sought in the administration; if authority is

not concentrated at the head of affairs it must be distributed among the members, and this dispersion, which has been appropriated by democratic States, results in the most persecuting tyranny for the subjects.

Society thus attains perfection when, to a strong constitution, it unites a wise administration, just as man can achieve fulfilment only if he unites with a sane and strong temperament a judiciously adapted routine. Harmony then reigns between the administration and the government, as between the ideal government and the natural constitution. Institutions are then the necessary consequence of the political laws and the constitutional laws are fundamental. Founded on the nature of man and of things, expression of the relationships established by nature itself, they do not require human ordination.

II. Society: A Comparative Study

From the moment that, for Bonald, the form of the government is identified with the very constitution of the society, distinguishing the forms of government is equivalent to defining the types of society: an exercise instigated by the Esprit des lois, which Bonald quotes at length:

> I assume three definitions, or rather three facts: that a republican government is that in which the entire people, or only a part of the people, possesses supreme power; monarchical government, that in which a single person governs by fixed and established laws; despotic government, that in which a single person directs everything by his own will and caprice. 26

Bonald seizes upon Montesquieu's triple social classification, in which he believes he has found support for his own. In Montesquieu's definition of monarchy as opposed to despotism and republicanism, Bonald believes he has detected his own distinction between constituted and non-constituted societies. The monarchy alone, for Bonald, is modelled upon the nature of its constitution; and he turns to Montesquieu for substantiation:

> Only one governs, but by fixed and established laws, by fundamental laws. 27

But republican and despotic governments are definable only in terms of their externals: republican government by reference to its machinery of government -

26. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp. 301-2.
27. Ibid, p. 302.

> that where the people "en corps" or only a section of the people are sovereign, 28

and despotic government only by reference to its implied effects -

> that in which one alone, without laws or regulations, directs everything by his own will and caprice. 29

These divisions may, however, argues Bonald, be more broadly classified as constituted societies (monarchy) on the one hand and, on the other, non-constituted societies (despotism and republicanism) which are not so much societies as governments. Did Montesquieu not recognize that the monarchy alone possesses a constitution and that it alone can be identified by its constitution; that despotism and republicanism are merely types of government and can be only superficially defined? Did not Montesquieu therefore recognize that there are only two kinds of societies: those which are constituted and those which are not; those whose laws are necessary and natural, and those whose laws are arbitrary?[30]

There is an element of truth in Bonald's triumphant rhetoric. It is true that Montesquieu favours monarchy as being, in certain circumstances, the best form of

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid, pp. 302-3.

government, and that his method is comparative. But Bonald overestimates his debt to the illustrious Montesquieu. Viewing monarchy with the myopic vision of a monarchist, Bonald is dominated by the consideration of absolute principles. He seeks the perfect form of government, that which is forever in harmony with human nature, and he admits of no compromise. Montesquieu, despite the preface in which he confesses that the facts themselves meant nothing to him until he discovered the principles they were to illustrate,[31] is really interested in discovering how far particular forms of government are associated with determined states of society, and instead of pronouncing absolute condemnation or commendation, he is prepared to accept the relative merits of various governments, always seeking and advising improvements within particular frames of reference. Some consider, he wrote, illustrating his originality,

> that nature having established paternal authority, the most natural government is that of a single person. But the example of paternal authority proves nothing... Better it is to say that the government most conformable to nature is that which best agrees with the humour and disposition of the people in whose favour it is established. 32

31. Esprit des lois, preface. Œuvres complètes, Vol. I, lxij.
32. Ibid, Bk. I, 3. Vol. I, p. 8.

However, Bonald has not remained indifferent to, nor untouched by, Montesquieu's social analysis. And in his final work his last attempt at a comparative study of societies is clearly influenced by the Esprit des lois.

In the same way, according to Bonald in the Principe constitutif,[33] that the family may be either monogamous or polygamous, so political society may be either "monocratic" or "polycratic" - in other words, monarchic or popular. However, each of these general types admits of further subdivision: and within the monocratic category Bonald distinguishes royal monarchy (which is true monarchy), despotic monarchy and elective monarchy; while he divides polycratic societies into democracy, aristocracy, and representative government.

Now royal monarchy is the only form of government in which the three social persons are completely distinct and homogeneous. This is the way it was, in Bonald's view, under the ancien régime: power was hereditary, the ministry - under the name of the nobility - was hereditary, and the subjects also, through profession and property, participated in this inheritance of traditions and continuity; power was independent, the ministry dependent upon the power under whose

33. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.74.

direction it acted, and the subjects, on whose behalf the ministry exercised its authority, had no other function than to obey.

This perfect distinction and homogeneity of social ranks is found neither in despotic nor in elective monarchies. In the former - and Bonald cites the example of Turkey - power is hereditary, but the ministers may be dismissed or reappointed, and then only in a private capacity, at the pleasure of the sultan. In the latter (elective monarchy) - Poland, for instance - the nobility is hereditary, but the throne is only for life, and in reality is dependent upon the conditions imposed by those who have instituted it. In Poland, the ministers have too much control; in Turkey, the monarch has excessive power. The first is therefore prone to anarchy, the other to despotism. In either case, the State is weak and troubled, and the subjects oppressed.

Diametrically opposed to monarchy (government by one) is democracy (government by all). Instead of being distinct, fixed and homogeneous, the social persons merge, in democracy, into one: the people - who are power and ministers and subjects. This causes utter confusion and is, strictly speaking, unattainable.

Aristocracies (such as Venice or Genova) are characterized by the presence of two social elements: the ministers and the subjects - the nobility and the people. Aristocracies are easily recognizable, continues Bonald, because the class of citizens who collectively exercise power and call themselves the Senate or its equivalent, lose the title of nobility in order to assume the title of patriciate. And this is not simply a difference of terminology; for while the nobility serves power, the patriciate exercises it: the nobility is minister to the power, the patriciate is the power. In the hereditary nature of their power, in the resultant stability, aristocracies approach the advantages of monarchy; but in the collective form of their power, they share also the vices of democracy: aristocracies harness the advantages of one to the inconveniences of the other.

As for representative government - the three social persons can be discerned, but only nominally. The monarch represents power; the nobility or patriciate (Chamber of Peers in France, Lords in England) represent power; and the subjects themselves, by representation, claim power. Shared power is an inevitable consequence of mixed governments; which means that in representative government, unity of power is only a fiction.

Bonald himself, in his social analysis, confesses his debt to the author of the Esprit des lois; but it is clear that he pays greater tribute than their affinity warrants. Montesquieu - and herein lies his originality - Montesquieu classifies the various societies not in terms of the number of persons holding power, but in terms of the structural differences between societies: territorial magnitude, population figures, size, disposition, and cohesion of parties, customs, religion, crime-rate, and so on. Bonald certainly has been impressed by this method and proceeds in an analogous fashion by identifying (at least in constituted societies) the government with the constitution, and by distinguishing the diverse forms of government according to the nature and the relationship of the essential elements of the society. But while Montesquieu's distinctions are modelled always upon the comparative, relative character and evolution of societies, Bonald's, despite his constant appeal to history, preserve always his absolutist approach.

This becomes more and more evident in the major works, where Bonald's social analysis breaks down into a simplified opposition of monarchy to democracy.

III. Monarchy v Democracy

> In monarchy (writes Bonald) everything is social: religion, power, and distinctions; in a popular State, everything is individual: each has his own religion, each his power, each wishes to be distinguished or to dominate either by talent or force. In monarchy, because power is social, it is limited by the social institutions; in democracy, because power is individual, it is limited by man. Monarchy considers man in society... republicanism considers man apart from society... And since society is made for man, and man for society, monarchy, which considers man in his relations with society, is suited to man and to society. And republicanism, which considers man without relation to society, is unsuited both to society and to man. 34

The opposition of the two forms of government is thus epitomized, for Bonald, by the opposition of the general to the particular, the individual to the social, the natural to the artificial.

34. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp. 286-287.

In monarchy, a single ruler expresses the general will of society - that ensemble of desires, aspirations and wills which, more or less consciously, are in the heart of each and which have as their end the preservation and perfection of society. In democracy, a multitude of powers express only the particular wills, the particular interests.

Obedience to the monarch is thus obedience to the will of society, of nature, and of God, from whom, in this case, power emanates. This obedience represents true liberty, whereas submission to a popular assembly, or to power which derives from it, is obedience to a particular will, to man, to the individual, and not to society. This is to renounce liberty since, according to Bonald, liberty is the condition requisite to the attainment of perfection, the accomplishment of purpose. Just as a stone is said to Be free when, unimpeded, it obeys the force of gravity, writes Bonald, pursuing a familiar analogy, so man may be said to be free

> when he accomplishes his will by his power or, what amounts to the same thing, when he has the power to accomplish his will - 35

which means,

35. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres IV, pp.93-94.

The liberty of any
being is synonymous
with its perfectibility. 36

But man is, by nature, a social animal; therefore his will must be the will of society, which is the general will. Man is thus free only if he can conform to this general will, and this is possible only in that society in which the general will is attained and expressed by the general power; which means, only in monarchy can man be free. To accomplish his will through society and to depend upon the monarch who represents the general will - this, for man, is liberty. While to accomplish a particular will, to depend upon power which expresses only particular wills - this is slavery; hence slavery is the natural concomitant of democracy where all is particular. Here, in effect, man is dependent upon man, upon the power of man, upon the laws of man: what the democrats call liberty is, in Bonald's view, the subjection of the particular wills of others to the particular will of self - a subversion of man's natural end, which is the general will for the preservation of society. But, in monarchy, man is entirely independent of men and dependent only upon the general will. The king, independent in his person, is subject only to the laws: to the natural laws of

36. Législation primitive, Œuvres II, p.88.

society to which he owes his existence, to the political laws which determine the manner of his political existence, to the religious laws common to all men, and to the civil laws of proprietorship. The ministers, subject equally to the laws, the same laws as the monarch, and in addition to the special laws of their station, are independent of the subjects, and even independent of the will of the monarch, at least of his particular will, since they are obliged to obey, in Bonald's scheme of things, only the general will manifested and transmitted by the general power (without having, it is true, he admits, what renders this independence quite illusory, to distinguish in the transmitted orders between the general will of the sovereign and the particular will of the king). As for the other citizens - the subjects - they are also subjected to the natural, political, religious and civil laws as well as to the particular laws of their respective professions; but they are not dependent upon the particular will of others, nor even upon the particular will of the monarch

> since they should recognize only the general will manifested in the prescribed forms. 37

This independence of all members of society with regard

37. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.93.

to men and to particulars and this dependence only in relation to the general will and laws are, then, the attributes of monarchy and the assurance of genuine liberty, which can never be attained in democracy. This concept of liberty-through-dependence recalls Montesquieu's admonition:

> It is true that in democracies the people seem to act as they please; but political liberty does not consist of unlimited freedom. In governments - that is, in societies directed by laws - liberty can consist only in the power of doing what we ought to want, and in not being constrained to do what we ought not to want. We must have continually present in our minds the difference between independence and liberty. 38

Expressing the general will of society or nature, monarchy, Bonald continues, really has no need of legislators; quite simply, there are no new laws to be created. Nature itself makes the laws - and amends them: quite imperceptibly customs develop, assuming eventually the force of law where their authority is

38. Esprit des lois, Bk. XI, 3. Œuvres complètes, I, p. 205-6.

uncircumscribed by time or place; while the disturbances which trouble society are nature's indication of a defective or incomplete law. The monarch has only to write at the dictate of nature:

> The monarch is, as it were, only the secretary of nature. 39

On the other hand, in democracy, laws are not the work of nature, but of man; they are arbitrary, not necessary, and express, not the will of nature, but often just the whim of the legislator. And precisely because they do not conform to nature, because they are even contrary to nature, it becomes necessary for the legislator to intervene continually, not only in the general organization of society, but in the most trifling details of administration; he must determine everything and regulate everything, because he cannot count on nature itself. Monarchy, by virtue of the strength of its constitution, does not need to descend to such trivial prescriptions: it does not fall into that tyrannical administration which, in democracy, is the penalty to be paid for the weakness of the constitution.

The excessive regimentation of democracy - democracy, which is based upon the supposition that the liberty of the citizens is sacred and inviolable -

39. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.329.

actually results in the abuse of this liberty. This, to Bonald's way of thinking, is the logical consequence of the democratic view of society and man. Regarding society as the result of a contract and believing man to be naturally good, the democrats must perforce allow free play to every whim. But before long it becomes necessary to face the consequences of this blunder, and around these unrestrained wills it becomes necessary to impose all manner of "trivial laws and trivial precautions" until, finally, they are held in bondage. But in monarchy, where man is seen in his true light: with a will very often depraved, with instincts to be curbed and passions to be subdued, he is denied "the exercise of his will", but at the same time left with "every natural liberty in his actions". If he misappropriates this liberty, he renders account of himself only to religion, whose action begins where that of government ends.[40]

In monarchy, the nobility intervenes (in a manner both spontaneous and necessary) between sovereign and subject - a body which, ministry of the first for the service of the second, represents for both the surest safeguard of independence and liberty. Its aim is the actual preservation of society. As the public force,

40. Ibid, pp. 116-117.

under the direction of the sovereign from whom it must always remain distinct, the nobility has the double functions of combat and of counsel. It combats, not by taking the offensive (which is contrary to the constitution) but by remaining on the defensive. It counsels, that is, it acts in an advisory capacity to the king,,gradually establishing itself as a depository of the laws.

In democracy, the subjects, being also sovereign, are placed in the vulnerable position of having to rely entirely upon their own strength of resistance, which is puny and easily broken; sooner or later, despotism encroaches. Montesquieu's influence is quite apparent in this interpretation of the intermediary and hereditary nature of the nobility. In monarchy, wrote Montesquieu,

> the most natural, intermediate, and subordinate power is that of the nobility... Abolish the privileges of the nobility... in a monarchy and you will soon have either a popular state, or else a despotic one. 41

No monarch, no nobility; no nobility, no monarch - instead, a despot, Montesquieu contended,[42] and Bonald agrees. That the nobility, he adds,[43] is indeed a

41. Esprit des lois, Bk. II, 4. Œuvres complètes, I, pp. 20-21.
42. Ibid, p. 21.
43. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp. 172-176.

protection for the subjects is demonstrated by the fact that the first precaution taken by despots is the destruction of the nobility's independence.

Doubtless the nobility may, by the privileges which are attached to its position, provoke envy. But these privileges are merely the provision and compensation for the duties which are incumbent upon it. And it is the duties - not the privileges - which should be considered. Viewing it in this light, the subjects, instead of envying the nobility, should stand in awe of the onerous honour of being admitted into its ranks. For its ranks are open to all - all those who, by labour or fortune, have accrued sufficient wealth to gain independence. Wealth is the open sesame to the ministry: Bonald's reply to those who would espouse equality of opportunity. The nobility is not a decoration, nor a prejudice, nor a usurpation - but a duty.[44] And, again, the Esprit des lois expresses succinctly the same sentiments:

> (The nobility) should not be a boundary between the power of the prince and the weakness of the people, but the link which joins them. 45

Bonald's conception of the role and status of the

44. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 211.
45. Bk. V, 9. Œuvres complètes, I, p. 73.

nobility is, quite clearly, Montesquieu-inspired.

By misconstruing the role of the nobility, Bonald proceeds, by suppressing this necessary intermediary between the sovereign and the subjects, by denying the latter the natural defenders of their interests and their liberty, by imposing upon them a master with unlimited freedom, democracy offers no alternative to direct subjection except the recourse to revolt, which thus becomes a permanent condition of society. In monarchy, on the other hand, the appeal to violence is never necessary, since oppression will be deflected, by the nobility in the first instance or, if a second should arise, by the passive resistance of the subjects.

The institution of the nobility provides a clear contrast between the social character of monarchy, as opposed to democracy, where everything is individual. The nobility is a profession, attached not to individuals but to families in whom, by property inheritance, it becomes fixed and perpetual. And what is true of the nobility is true of all monarchic institutions. Monarchy recognizes the individual only in the family and the family only by profession[46] it is a family organization. At the top of the social professional ladder is the

46. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.313.

royal family, which exercises power; beneath them, the noble families devoted to advising and serving the king; finally, the subject families occupied in work and industry. And the families, in their turn, form social groups ("corps"). The individual by himself is of no consequence; he acquires significance only through the family or group to which he belongs, which, either by inheritance, education or environment, has prepared him to fulfil his role adequately. Monarchy, Bonald likes to emphasize, has no need of great kings, nor of great men in any profession; it is sufficient that there be good kings, good ministers and good subjects. Monarchy is based upon the belief that, if exceptional events demanding exceptional kings and men arise, the events themselves will produce them.

If monarchy is the organization of families, democracy, on the contrary, is the organization man; where individuals (without the support of either social group or tradition) are called upon to fulfil all professions.

> Sometimes with a hundred
> thousand arms (the people)
> destroy everything; and
> sometimes with a hundred
> thousand feet, they creep
> like an insect. 47

47. Esprit des lois, Bk. II, 2. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p. 44.

wrote Bonald, quoting Montesquieu. And this is only to be expected, for the individual has only his own resources: upon his qualities or faults depends, at every moment, the functioning of the democratic social organism; mediocre or bad, he is useless or dangerous; and so it becomes essential for him to be superior, which is both contrary to nature and a threat to society. Contrary to nature, since nature is replete with mediocrity, but meagre in excellence. A threat to society, because exceptional men, dissociated from the exceptional circumstances appropriate to them, refuse to be integrated; and then, tormented by a desire to create great events, they create only unnatural ones. The benefit of monarchy is precisely that it spares society from great men "who wish to become even greater"[48] to the detriment of the strength and unity of the State. The disadvantage of democracy is that it encourages this plague of great men, who are a scourge on society and a permanent danger to the liberty of the citizens.

The preponderant role of the individual in democracy; the constant need for superior men at all levels of the social hierarchy; the abrupt admission to the professions without preliminary family or

48. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.102.

social education; the temporary and precarious nature of these positions which are always entrusted to individuals from whom they can, just as arbitrarily, be withdrawn in favour of others; the absence of a guarantee for the liberty which is no longer to be found; - these suffice to explain, for Bonald, why Montesquieu should have made virtue the principle of democracy![49]

> There is not much probity required to support a monarchical or despotic government. The force of law in one, and the prince's arm in the other, are sufficient to direct and maintain the whole. But in a popular state, one spring more is necessary, namely: virtue. [50]

wrote Montesquieu. Certainly, avers Bonald,[51] extraordinary qualities must be demanded of the citizens, where the government itself is deficient. But, he continues, in democracy virtue cannot afford to be limited, as Montesquieu restricted it, to political virtue, but must be extended to moral and religious virtue. From all of which it should be obvious that such a government is, in fact, unattainable

49. Théorie du pouvoir, I, Bk. VI, Chap. II, Œuvres III, pp. 305ff.
50. Esprit des lois, Bk. III, 3. Œuvres complètes I, p. 26.
51. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 305.

and unnatural. It demands of the individual a perfection which is not by nature his - a perfection which, if it did exist, would render all government and law redundant. Rousseau had good reason for saying that democracy is a government suited only to gods. Much wiser and less exacting, monarchy takes account of the weaknesses of human nature and places greater store upon the social group or the profession than upon the individual, addressing itself less to virtue in general than to one particular virtue: honour. The notion of honour as the pivot of monarchy is unquestionably drawn from the Esprit des lois although, as usual, identical conclusions are not reached by amenable methods. For Montesquieu, honour is monarchy's substitution for the virtue upon which democracy depends; in monarchy, he writes, in his dispassionate manner,

> it is extremely difficult for the people to be virtuous... (But) if monarchy wants one spring it is provided with another. Honour, that is, the prejudice of every person and rank, supplies the place of the political virtue of which I have been speaking. 52

In Montesquieu's view, a monarchical government supposes

52. Esprit des lois, Bk. III, 5-6. Œuvres complètes, I, pp. 32-33.

pre-eminences and ranks, and since it is the nature of honour to aspire to preferments and titles, honour is properly suited to this government. It is a stimulus on which it is easier to rely, for the general good of society, than the virtue of the citizens: by acting for himself and for his class, each is acting for the entire society. For Bonald, honour is rather the virtue appropriate to each social group or profession; and it assumes particular forms in particular professions. Thus, claims Bonald,[53] for the warrior honour is bravery, for the magistrate equity, for the priest propriety and gravity, for the gentry loyalty, for the scholar truth; French honour is fidelity to the king, which is patriotism; honour for a woman is irreproachable conduct. So many virtues - all of which are the mainstay of the monarchy; all of which comprehend the common denominator: they are social, which means they are exhibited in and for society. In democracy, by comparison, virtue is always individual - private, rather than public; where inappropriate virtues may even run contrary to the interests of society.

By its unique virtues, by its hierarchical organization, by its natural constitution, monarchy, for Bonald, assumes not only the true liberty which

53. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.310.

consists of the ability of each to attain his perfection, but also the true equality for which, erroneously, democracy claims the privilege.[54] Bonald is clearly not concerned with physical and moral equality (nature, he says, did not wish it, and man cannot redress nature), but with social and political equality. The democrats believe it consists of the equal right of each to express his will and to exercise his power; but as, in practice, this right is real only for some and remains purely illusory for others, such equality is a chimera. In monarchy, however, equality is a reality - familial rather than individual - consisting of the capacity of each to graduate, by labour and thrift, from the domestic to the public estate, to join the nobility in order to serve the State.

Bonald does not regard the nobility - and he takes as his prototype the French nobility - as a closed class or caste. He considers it, on the contrary, open to all who, by their efforts, show themselves to be capable and worthy of the rank. Nothing could be more natural or more legitimate than ambition: not in the language of passion where it signifies the lust for wealth and the means of dominating others; but in the language of morality and political theory where it indicates the

54. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.101.

altruistic desire:

> to serve the public
> in the public professions. 55

This ambition, claims Bonald, was in the heart of every family under the ancien régime, and it was for all a principle worthy of emulation. To them, the constitution seemed to say:

> When you have fulfilled
> your goal in domestic
> society, which is to
> acquire independence and
> property by legitimate
> endeavour, order and
> economy; when you have
> attained self-sufficiency
> and are financially in a
> position to serve the State,
> the greatest honour to which
> you could aspire would be to
> enter the order which is
> specially dedicated to
> serving the State and, once
> there, you will become
> eligible for all public
> positions. 56

True political equality, like true liberty, is found then, by Bonald, only in monarchy. The nobility, which acts as a seminary for public positions, is open to all. And this prospect suffices to maintain hope in each heart, hope which keeps men happy and sustains

55. "Observations sur l'ouvrage de Mme. la baronne de Staël", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp. 678-679.
56. Ibid, p. 681.

them in their efforts. This resignation and happiness is absent in democracies: where every individual immediately aspires to all positions, discontent is the natural result of their disappointed ambitions. As Montesquieu, with greater moderation, expressed it:

> Ambition is pernicious in a republic. But in a monarchy it has some good effects; it gives life to the government, and is attended with this advantage, that it is in no way dangerous, because it may be continually checked. 57

However, equality, in this sense, does not appear to be in the forefront of Bonald's preoccupations. It seems to have been invoked merely to oppose democracy on its own territory. Actually, for Bonald, what constitutes equality in society is less the admission or admissability to all positions than

> equal submission on the part of all, to the general laws which are common to all, and to the particular laws which relate to specific professions, 58

in the same way that political liberty is submission

57. Esprit des lois, Bk. III, 7. Œuvres complètes, I, p. 34.
58. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 93.

to the only general will of society and independence with regard to all other wills. There is liberty and equality in monarchy, and only in monarchy, because there, and there alone, power, minister and subject are subjected at the same time to the laws of their station, and to the laws common to the State; and because they obey only the general will and not the particular wills which are not laws. In the final analysis, what Bonald understands by political equality is the equal resignation of all to the inequality of circumstances: the gradation of professions, the hierarchy of social positions; this inequality, these distinctions, this hierarchy, which is the very essence of monarchy, are so much more readily acceptable where they are considered beneficial and necessary, and where it is clearly not impossible to breach the degrees. Equality as the democrats interpret it runs contrary to the very nature of society. They wish all men to be politically equal. But, replies Bonald, they must, then, wish to make all professions equal - which is to argue that the professions which feed, lodge and clothe man are as important and as honourable as those which teach him his duties, or fight his battles, or punish his infractions.[59]

59. "Observations sur l'ouvrage de Mme la baronne de Staël", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp.685-6.

For want of liberty and equality, democratic societies live in a perpetual state of agitation and turbulence. Uncommitted appetites, ambitions and passions must induce a bitter struggle for power, in which the passions of each encounter no other barrier than the passions of others. The monarchic state, on the other hand, because it guarantees true liberty and equality, experiences only tranquillity and stability. The advantages of monarchy which Montesquieu discerned: its ranks, its permanence, its constancy and security, are even more apparent to Bonald. In a regime in which each has and accepts his station, fixed and distinct, whence would disorder derive?

Monarchy also, by virtue of its constitution, shuns external disturbances. Conquest, declares Bonald,[60] is incompatible with monarchy. Based upon the principle of preservation, and not aggrandizement, wars are limited to those which are strictly necessary for the preservation of society. As for Louis XIV's wars of conquest - to Bonald, these are evidence of France's weakened constitution - the result, Bonald considers, of the gradual alienation of a large part of the royal domain and the schism between Church and State - which had destroyed that fixity which is the true limitation

60. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp. 217-218.

of power and the necessary result of the constitution. "Republican France", after all, has not hesitated to wage war beyond all frontiers:Pyrenees, Alps, Rhine, and even the Atlantic, and this is because her constitution has been, not merely altered, but destroyed: public religion, throne, and social distinctions.

One final difference (which is a consequence rather than a cause of his preceding comparisons) Bonald discerns: this is the presence, in monarchy, and the absence, in democracy, of a national character. More readily felt than defined, writes Bonald,[61] the national character of a people would appear to be the attachment of that people to perceptible objects of their affection - attachment to worship, to the royal family, to the families in distinguished positions, to the social proprieties. It is formed of a mixture of habits, customs, and way of life. Although, obviously, this line of inquiry has been prompted by the Esprit des lois, for Bonald the national characteristics are not moulded by the climatic conditions in which Montesquieu seeks their explanation, but by the political and religious institutions: by education, by imitation, environment, and tradition.[62] A people who have most attachment - most constant,

61. Ibid, p.390.
62. Ibid, pp.361-2.

invariable attachment - will (in Bonald's opinion) have most customs and, therefore, most character; and this character will be more or less strongly pronounced in relation to the unity of the nation, and to the continuity of its traditions: its religion, its government, its royal family, its frontiers. Only monarchy realizes this continuity of conditions; a monarchic nation must therefore have more character

> since it has inherited all the social customs, since the citizens have before their eyes the objects of all their affections. 63

In democracy, on the other hand, there can be no national character. Where would be the objects of affection and the respect for customs? Not in religion, which is neither public nor common to all, and inspires neither veneration nor dependence. Not in authority, which is always particular, individual and transient, having no attachment to property or family. In democracy, in place of customs, there are opinions; in place of memories, reasoning; in place of feelings, thoughts. Thus, novelty is accepted without murmur; the virtues of other nations are extolled and emulated; mores are transplanted which refuse to take root in the

63. Ibid, p. 382.

new soil; and, as a consequence, the national character disintegrates. In monarchy, on the contrary, religion, language, institutions, education, administration, even literature and art, are jealously preserved; and innovations, particularly foreign imitations, are not regarded, for that fact alone, as superior. The people thus come to hold a high opinion of themselves and the national character is maintained in its purity.

Thus Bonald arrives at his conclusion, which was, of course, his starting-point: in monarchy - fixity, continuity, tradition; in democracy - instability and discontinuity. Order and peace in the hierarchy; trouble and anarchy in the uniformity which is really despotism. Liberty and equality are the attributes of feudalism. The feudal laws, wrote Bonald quoting Montesquieu,

> form a very beautiful prospect. A venerable old oak raises its lofty head to the skies, the eye sees from afar its spreading leaves; upon drawing nearer, it perceives the trunk but does not discern the root; the ground must be dug up to discover it. 64

64. Esprit des lois, Bk. XXX, 1. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 176.

And when the ground is dug? - For Montesquieu, the seeds of an entire forest in which all grandeur, strength and might are relative. For Bonald, one solitary venerable old oak - monarchy: to monarchy is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

— SECTION IV —

CONDORCET and ENLIGHTENMENT

While Rousseau and Montesquieu take the principal supporting roles in Bonald's dramatis personae, Condorçet, by comparison, makes only rare appearances. Nevertheless, Bonald did not underestimate Condorçet's role in either the preparation or the realization of the Revolution. He was aware of the active part which Condorçet had played in the work of the Legislative Assembly and the Convention, in the compilation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1793, his collaboration in the Constitution of the Year One, and the organization of the Republic. He was aware also of Condorçet's radical Jacobin sympathies in the trial of Louis XVI, and he was not oblivious to Condorçet's vituperative attacks against religion and those associated with it. These were grounds for antipathy and denunciation no less fundamental than those furnished by the Contrat social and the Esprit des lois; but Bonald appears to have become aware of them only after the Théorie du pouvoir was completed. Condorçet's Esquisse d'un Tableau reached him when he arrived at Constance in 1796. Immediately he despatched for publication a supplement expressing

the reflections inspired by Condorçet's doctrine of human progress. An analysis of these reflections exposes Bonald's comprehension of, and attitude towards, Condorçet and, consequently, Bonald's own doctrine of progress and enlightenment.

Bonald regards the Esquisse (Condorçet's "prophetic trumpet") as the apocalypse of the new Gospel: the Declaration of the Rights of Man symbolizes the Decalogue and the French Republic the Exodus achieved. Bonald holds this work (which, he claims, expresses nothing but contempt for all religion, derision for the Christian religion, hatred for monarchy and disdain for all government which is not popular) to be the last word of philosophy, in the contest to which it has challenged society.[1] And Bonald, taking up the challenge, sounds his own prophetic note:

> For myself... I would dare to predict quite the opposite and announce the triumph of the Christian religion and the destruction of republican government... France never has been and never will be, a republic. (France) is a monarchy in revolution. 2

1. "Observations sur un ouvrage posthume de Condorçet", Œuvres IV, p.161.
2. Ibid, p.182.

From beginning to end, writes Bonald,

> the Esquisse is just a disguised sophism, presented with a display of erudition and scientific apparatus capable of impressing the uninitiated or unsuspecting reader. 3

The theme which Condorçet develops is that the progress of knowledge renders men better and societies perfect. For, allied to Condorçet's distrust of faiths supernatural was his belief in the value of the knowledge which the physical sciences would impart. To the philosophes - and Condorçet in particular - science had rendered obsolete the whole basis upon which the ecclesiastical edifice rested. Christian revelation was rejected as mere hypothesis, and miracles as undemonstrated, unscientific, and therefore untrue. This supposes first of all that

> man makes and perfects society - 4

which is, in Bonald's eyes, the fundamental heresy of the eighteenth-century philosophes. Secondly, it assumes that knowledge (that is, scientific knowledge) necessarily improves the man - and this, too, is false, claims Bonald.[5] The philosopher cannot resist the desire

3. Ibid, p. 165.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, pp. 165-166.

to dominate by imposing his opinions or his wit, any more than the military dictator can resist using physical force. The natural sciences add nothing to the virtue of the man; and they contribute but little to his happiness. Moreover, instead of fostering the preservation of society, they actually hasten its destruction by their encouragement of commerce and luxury, which are corruptive influences on men and corrosive elements in society.[6]

Condorçet's confidence in establishing, on the rigorous certainty of mathematics - in particular, upon the calculation of probabilities - the duties of man and the laws of society, morality and politics, encounters in Bonald only a scepticism full of disdain and indignation. The time, then, will come, he writes with heavy sarcasm, when everything which relates to the faculties - even the intellect - of man, to the rules of manners and duties, to the principles of the social order, will be "weighed, measured and calculated", truth "like matter", virtue "like length", happiness "like quantity"! Conscience will be merely an equation, morality only a problem![7] Condorçet conceals the concepts in the verbiage.

All Condorçet's reasoning leads logically, in

6. Ibid, p.167.
7. Ibid, p.170.

Bonald's mind, to this conclusion: that, if the sciences perfect society, the prize of government naturally falls to the scientists. Such a concept, writes Bonald disparagingly,[8] was assured of making a great impact among the crowd of those semi-savants whose numbers had been greatly increased by the Dictionaries, Encyclopaedias and Journals, and who all believed themselves called to instruct man and to direct society. The art with which it was presented could not but be conducive to its success. The method, claims Bonald, is "simple and exact": it consists of proceeding from the known to the unknown, from the true to the probable. But readers should be on their guard for, says Bonald,[9] the object is continually changing, so that Condorçet draws his moral conclusions from physical premisses. From the progress realized in the natural sciences and the arts, he passes adroitly to conjectures on the progress that man will make in the science of manners, duties, and the perfection of the social order. Condorçet continually confuses

> The certainty of what
> is with the hope of
> what should be. 10

And what a contrast there is between these hopes and the realities! What cruel disillusion comes with the

8. Ibid, p.174.
9. Ibid, p.175.
10. Ibid.

facts! Philosophy promised society virtue, happiness, immortality; it has yielded only corruption, misery and death. The debate between philosophy and society is reduced by Bonald to very simple alternatives: either society (by its constitution) moulds man, or man (by his inventions and discoveries) shapes society; to reduce it still further, either society shapes itself and man, or man moulds himself and society.[11] Experience is there to adjudicate.

Condorçet, just as intensely as Montesquieu and Rousseau, believed in the absolute value of the individual, in his natural and imprescriptable rights, in the fundamental liberty and equality of all men: there, for him, was an inviolable force before which the power of the State must yield. Bonald, on the contrary, acknowledges the individual only in society; he accords him duties rather than rights; and he denounces equality as being contrary to nature. For Condorçet, although he admits the necessary, natural and spontaneous nature of social existence, although he speaks neither of natural law nor of a social contract, for him, as for Montesquieu and Rousseau, society appears always as an artificial creation: human reason can fashion it to its own liking. The insistence upon artificiality is, of course, particularly

11. Ibid, pp. 180, 183.

repugnant to Bonald. Society is the work of nature; nature is the only legislator. The idea of human intervention in the formation or development of the social group is completely foreign to him. "Social art" says Bonald, borrowing Condorçet's own terminology, is an apt expression to describe the application to society of the principles established by the social scientists. It is a fact worth remarking, he writes:

> philosophy makes of society an art, nature makes of it a living reality! 12

And nature, in Bonald's scheme, is synonymous with religion. All the attitudes of the author of the Esquisse which Bonald sets out to refute: the artificial character of societies, the right of the individual to be appointed judge of institutions and legislator of peoples, the substitution of arbitrary theories and systems for the constitutions of nature, and the sovereignty of human reason - are merely pawns in the great contest between religion and philosophy. The champions of Reason and the champions of Religion were, to quote Pierre Bayle, fighting desperately for the possession of men's souls.[13] Few of the protagonists would admit to compromises: either the laws of

12. Ibid, p.169.
13. Quoted by Paul Hazard, The European Mind 1680-1715, (Pelican Books, 1964) p.9.

authority, order and progress were divine and immutable, or they were human and historical. Condorçet, of course, adopted the latter alternative; but Bonald, influenced by his adversaries more than he realized, (perhaps in an attempt to be more persuasive), chose the somewhat paradoxical argument for laws which were at the same time divine and immutable - and historical.

> In spite of the
> differences between
> my principles of society
> and those of Condorçet, 14

acknowledges Bonald, we are in accord on one important point: the indefinite perfectibility of man.

Condorçet, in the Esquisse d'un Tableau, claimed that

> The progress (of humanity)
> is subject to the same
> general laws that can be
> observed in the development
> of the individual... 15

Bonald may well have had Condorçet's analogy in mind when he wrote

> Society then, like man,
> passes through several
> different stages and the
> two advances may be compared
> with one another; society has,
> like the individual, its childhood,
> its adolescence and its manhood. 16

14. "Supplément", Œuvres IV, p.179.
15. Esquisse, (London, 1955), p.4.
16. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.333.

In childhood, society is in an imperfect state of ignorance, of undirected parts; adolescence (which Bonald likens to Hobbes's "robust child") brings with it corruption, passion and error - a stage beyond which pagan peoples have never advanced; but in maturity society achieves its perfect natural end, characterized by reason, truth and virtue.[17]

For Bonald then, as for Condorçet,

> Society moves slowly
> (towards the achievement
> of its natural end)...
> it never stops. 18

As Bonald recognizes, as the final historical explanation the doctrine of progress must be an all-embracing one, and to the impulse for perfection he attributes even those things that he most abhors:

> ... all the innovations
> attempted by governments,
> all the revolutions effected
> by the people, all the schemes
> for amelioration devised by
> philosophers, 19

even though he is forced to retrace his steps by assuring his readers that these acts, springing (as they must) from divine sources, nevertheless had not received divine sanction and would have no permanence,

17. Ibid.
18. "Du traité de Westphalie", Œuvres II, p.430.
19. "Du perfectionnement de l'homme", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.518.

> ... since the laws of God can redress the mores of man. 20

To Bonald, the difference between mores and laws is a fundamental one. Mores are man-made; laws are divinely ordained - and in proportion as the social mores can be made to conform to the revealed commandments (which represent truth), in such degree can society be said to be perfect. And, Bonald would have us believe, it is the omnipresence of the Prime Mover which prevents society from continuing in the state of perpetual depravation to which individualist doctrines would have it succumb; while progress, although Bonald always equates it with conservatism,[21] becomes, just as Condorçet saw it: the historical manifestation of the inherent desire to attain the state of perfection in society -

> the progress of European political society towards perfection has been a development from small barbaric tribes... to civilization. 22

and in the individual -

> ... man born to attain perfection, because he is perfectible. 23

20. "Considérations philosophiques sur les principes et leur application", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.42.
21. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.376.
22. Ibid, p.332.
23. Essai analytique, Œuvres I, p.70.

In an argument which parallels one of his early proofs of the existence of God - that the idea of God necessarily presupposes the fact of God - Bonald establishes his point:

> ... if perfection were not inherent in the nature of man, the concept of perfectibility would not exist in his ideas and would have no place in his language. 24

So history becomes determinant. It is the process by which potentiality becomes actuality, in proportion as man comes to understand the mysterious ways of Providence. The concept of perfectibility which is receiving much attention, writes Bonald,

> constitutes the capacity to proceed from bad to good and from good to best: that is, to approach in application the best possible principle in theory. 25

Thus, he continues, the perfect society is that society whose laws conform to the principles of God (as revealed to Moses); and the perfect man - who can exist only in the perfect society - is he whose conduct is in accordance with these laws. Once again, Bonald's

24. "Considérations philosophiques sur les principes et leur application", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p. 37.
25. Ibid, p. 25.

theory of the ascendancy of society in the face of the individual is apparent;

> If we want man to be good, we must first establish the good society, 26

he claims. While the perfect society, alias the ideal constitution, is attainable in spite of the individual, the perfect man is only feasible in the context of the consummated society. Although Bonald shares Condorçet's confidence in the "indefinite perfectibility" of the human race, their expectations are at variance: the author of the Esquisse awaits this progress in man himself, while Bonald anticipates it first in society.[27]

> The progress (of humanity) is subject to the same general laws that can be observed in the development of the faculties of the individual, and it is indeed no more than the sum of that development realized in a large number of individuals joined together in society, 28

wrote Condorçet. It was statements such as this which led Bonald to range Condorçet amongst his eighteenth-century enemies -

26. "Du perfectionnement de l'homme", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.518.
27. "Supplément", Œuvres IV, p.179.
28. Esquisse, p.4.

> those who see in society
> and in religion only man
> ... his errors, his passions,
> his shortcomings - and then
> demand a reckoning with
> religion. 29

Nevertheless, by concurring with Condorçet that a stage, both theoretical and practicable, may be attained beyond which any further improvement in the human condition is inconsequential, and that the happiness of mankind is fulfilled in proportion as history progresses towards its determined objective, Bonald is treading the forbidden ground of the Enlightenment. Admittedly, it is Christianity's own Supreme Being that Bonald invokes:

> ... God in his wisdom has
> seen fit to reveal to men
> the final goal... By endowing
> them with the capacity for
> perfectibility, by commanding
> them even to perfection, he
> has taught them what it is
> and where it is to be found. 30

"What it is" is the theme of Bonald's entire writings: it is absolute monarchy, it is unity of power, it is inequality of rights, it is government based upon the Ten Commandments, it is Catholicism - but Catholicism so devoid of its former strength and character that it

29. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.38.
30. Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.38.

is almost unrecognizable; for, "where it is to be found" is not in the world-beyond-death, but in the very mortal world on earth.

And once both society and man have attained this state of perfection, what is to be said of man (who is no longer "naturally wicked") and of society (which is no longer required to restrain its perfected subjects) - that they are unnatural and their constitution inapt? But Bonald does not clarify this ambiguity.

This infinite, compulsive movement of man and society towards perfection placed Bonald - Bonald the apostle of counter revolution - in a very real dilemma. How to surmount the obstacle presented by the French Revolution? Indeed, how to integrate the progress of destiny with the regress of man? To overcome this difficulty Bonald deviates from the Enlightenment's theory of progress; instead of pursuing the straight-line concept expounded so forcefully by Condorçet, Bonald abandons it in favour of a cyclical pattern of development.[31] Society, he writes, may pass beyond

31. Bonald's theory of progress follows closely that of Vico, although Bonald himself seems to be unaware of the writings of the other. See The New Science of Giambattista Vico, Book V; also M.H. Quinlan, The Historical Thought of the Vicomte de Bonald, (Washington, 1953), chap. II.

the age of maturity into a decline or senility from which the only advance can be through complete rejuvenation, in which it may even be necessary to destroy in order to create.[32] And this is what has happened to France since the seventeenth century: when the mature age of Louis XIV[33] declined into the weak reigns of his successors until the Revolution - society in its death-throes - disgorged the means of regeneration.[34]

Bonald develops this theme - begun, certainly, as a particular deviation to explain the Revolution without destroying his own teleology - in universal terms:

> Three ages of power - personal, public and popular - incorporate all the casual elements of society; they explain the entire development of power, its birth, its life and its death... the evolution of society. 35

32. Législation primitive, Œuvres II, p.86.
33. "Du style et de la littérature", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.206.
34. Ibid, p.234; and Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.272-3.
35. "De la manière d'écrire l'histoire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp.417, 422.

The age of personal power is so designated because it is characterized by the leadership of the strong man who, inevitably, is present when circumstances demand, as in periods of disorder or revolution.[36] Thus

> Clovis raised on indestructible foundations the edifice of the French Empire, [37]

and Charlemagne emerged

> when the royal authority had been debilitated... [38]

Personal power becomes public power when a nobility emerges to implement the policies (by now laws) of their leader who by this time has adopted the title of king, thus establishing a line of hereditary succession to the throne and in the nobility. This is important, for the security of the age of public power depends upon this condition:-

> Power, once it was strengthened by public institutions and elevated beyond the interference of the subjects, was more independent... and more respected. [39]

36. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, pp. 55-59.
37. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 225.
38. Ibid, p. 226.
39. Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp. 418-419.

But when the king loses this respect and is reduced to nothing more than "the president of a deliberative assembly",[40] then power has passed into the hands of the sovereign people; it has become popular. This is the full turn of the wheel, because popular rule means chaos; and out of the disorder which must ensue, a strong man is certain to appear to establish peace and order through his personal government. Thus the cycle renews itself. The analogy of Louis XVI - the Revolution - and Napoleon is obvious, but Bonald does not leave it to conjecture:

> We have under our very eyes a memorable example of the formation of a society by the spontaneous ascendance of power. When Bonaparte appeared, France (was chaotic); and did he not proclaim himself First Consul, Consul for life, emperor,... and master...? [41]

So far so good; but, continuing Bonald's line of argument, Bonaparte's mastery of the situation and his establishment of personal power imply that the throne of France, in all legitimacy, must pass to his heirs just as surely as society must proceed to the stage of public power. And yet Bonald, both in his

40. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 226.
41. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p. 59.

life and in his writings, was adamant in his denial of Napoleon's claims.

> If legitimacy (Louis XVIII) had not asserted itself, would not power have passed down to the family of the victor (Napoleon)? 42

wrote Bonald in 1829, even then failing to see the significance (for his theory) of the fact that it did not do so. Elsewhere Bonald describes Napoleon's failure as "fated"[43] even though his success should have been guaranteed by the cyclical (personal, public and popular power) development of society which is, Bonald claims,

> ... capable of resolving great historical difficulties and explaining all political laws... 44

Napoleon's failure is, in fact, "fated", because Bonald's cycle of progress ends with the Revolution. History has no further need to renew

> the cycle which is given it to observe, 45

since the actual order, even as Bonald writes, is finally approximating to the potential, ordained order.

42. Ibid.
43. Pensées, Œuvres VI, p.125.
44. Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.421.
45. Ibid, p.425.

> ... It would appear that the French Revolution (has been) reserved for the final instruction of the universe... Now that we have witnessed... the (fall) of the most concentrated unity of power into the most abject demagogy, ... perfect theism... into infamous idolatry; now that we have witnessed... the return of authority... and of religion, all the social contingencies are comprehended, the social tour du monde has been completed; (France) has travelled to the two poles; no other lands remain to be discovered, and the time has come to offer to mankind the map of the moral universe, and the theory of society. 46

Despite his deviation from the Enlightenment's pattern of progress, Bonald never wavers in his optimistic vision of an earthly Utopia:

> ... the idea of perfecting society has been, for a long time in civilized Europe, the most universal and dominant idea... 47

The protégé of Bossuet wanted to keep his religion but embrace the Enlightenment too, right at their point of

46. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, pp. 202-3.
47. "Du perfectionnement de l'homme", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p. 518.

divergence. Not all of the philosophes' ideas, Bonald was finding to his detriment, could be dismissed without appeal; but here was one which, in the name of the Counter-Revolution, might have been. For when Bonald spoke in favour of the possibility of perfecting human society on earth, he was denying the very article which gave medieval Christianity its power - the promise of an after-life where paradise would be regained. Catholicism, with good reason, had been fundamentally unworldly. The people of the eighteenth century, with good reason also, had become admirers of the world.[48] They had ceased to think of the secret forces of nature as evil forces to be shunned and had come to think of them as beneficent forces to be understood and directed towards that final state which Condorçet described as

> ... an Elysium created
> by reason... 49

The idea that this final and perfect state would eventuate on earth was one of the eighteenth century's most significant substitutions for Christianity: one of the most important events in the intellectual history of modern times[50] in fact, part of the great

48. R.R.Palmer, Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France (New York, 1961), p.13.
49. Esquisse, p. 202.
50. Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (Mass., 1964), p. 21.

liberal tradition - alien territory indeed in which to find an 'old medieval schoolmaster' like Bonald trespassing.

So that, although Condorçet, in his long battle with an authoritarian church, a feudal aristocracy and an arbitrary government, rejected Leibnitz and his followers[51](among whom Bonald was proud to be numbered), nevertheless, in his naive optimism in human perfectibility and its realization through the logic of historical progress, he found an inadvertent disciple in Bonald. When Bonald accepted the Enlightenment's postulate that the theory of progress necessarily implied the theory of human and social perfectibility, he was introducing gunpowder, treason and plot into the old Catholic stronghold. It meant quite simply that tradition and conservation were not enough; that change - of a certain order, of course, but change nevertheless - could be condoned. And most important of all, it implied that the end of life was life itself. But Bonald did not perceive the consequences of his theories and, with a clear conscience, set out to restore the Catholic battlements (which the philosophes' armies had demolished) with the philosophes' own bricks: truth, reason, and the universal education of enlightenment.

* * * * * *

51. Esquisse, p.135.

(i) Truth

It was Condorçet's avowed intention to show

> why, in spite of the transitory successes of prejudice and the support that it receives from the corruption of governments or peoples, truth alone will obtain a lasting victory. 52

Condorçet's parable of the human race, advancing with a firm and sure step along the path of truth, virtue and reason,[53] foreshadows Bonald's moral: that where perfection is found, there also will be reason and virtue,[54] while

> Truth, like men and like society, is a seed which grows in the succession of ages and of men, always ancient in its beginning, always new in its sequential developments. 55

Truth is eternal; it is revealed at a single moment in time. It is also, however, historical - seeking, in the ages of men, to fulfil itself. But, as Bonald and his successors found to their detriment, it was not always possible to harness such disparate forces.

52. Ibid, p.10.
53. Ibid, p.201.
54. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.290.
55. Ibid, p.360.

Bonald expressed both the dilemma and his own attempt to reject Condorçet's historicism in favour of revelation when he wrote:

> It is not the progress of civilization which develops a knowledge of the truth; but the knowledge of the truth which hastens the progress of civilization. 56

Written or spoken, language, maintains Bonald, is a gift of God.[57] The consequence of this gift (which necessarily derives from the interdependence between thought and language) is that with the latter man received the former: he received thought - abstract thought which embodies all truths and which can be known only through language. Among the revealed truths were those which are the basis and the condition of every society: moral truth, political truth and religious truth. Transmitted from generation to generation first by the spoken word, later by the scriptures which established them, these truths have become humanity's patrimony: man inherits them by entering into society, not - and this subsequently

56. Ibid, p.334.
57. Ibid, p.356.

aroused the wrath of the Church[58] not because they are innate but because they are communicable.

> It is to the moral constitution of man that we must look for the foundations of his duties and the origins of his ideas of justice and virtue, 59

wrote Condorçet. But no, replies Bonald, it is not in his heart or in his conscience that man must seek moral law or religious inspiration.

> Man knows nothing of morality but what he has heard or seen; that is, what he has learnt through the spoken or written word. 60

58. Bonald lived to see his protégé, Lamennais, condemned by Gregory XVI for his Indifferentism and, twenty-one years later, Pius IX condemned Bonetty for Traditionalism. Bonald's son indignantly repudiated the idea of his father's having founded a heresy (Victor de Bonald, "M. de Bonald et le Traditionalisme", Le Correspondant XXXV, 288). But this apparently had little effect in convincing people of Louis de Bonald's orthodoxy: see Charles de Rémusat, "Du Traditionalisme", Revue des Deux-Mondes, IX, 51; and George Boas, French Philosophies of the Romantic Period (Baltimore, 1925) pp. 79-80.
59. Esquisse, p. 64.
60. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, pp. 356, 361.

It is not sufficient for man to seek within himself the distinction between the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, the existence of God, or the immortality of the soul; moreover it would be dangerous to abandon each to his own moods and inspirations. There is neither natural morality nor natural religion:

> The most natural religion,
> the knowledge of God...
> must be taught or revealed;
> it is necessary to teach
> men the moral truths if
> one wishes that they know
> them, and speak to them
> the word of God in order
> that they have the thought
> of God. 61

Thought is acquired by the child only through his communication with society (family, State and Church) which, ever since the original gift of language, has been the repository of all the moral and religious truths. The necessity for tradition is no less imperative than the necessity for the first gift; the former consolidates the latter. Tradition becomes, in Bonald's context, the continuous revelation across the centuries.

The theory of language gives thus to the moral, political and religious tradition a firm foundation,

61. Ibid, p.172.

and it invests truth, in Bonald's mind, with a divine character which forbids as sacrilege any examination, any inquiry. Condorçet's reproach of the scholars of antiquity comes to mind:

> An "it is said that" or an "it is written that" at the beginning of a phrase seemed to them sufficient to shelter them from the reproach of puerile credulity. 62

The man who questions himself concerning the value of the moral and religious truths which he finds established in society, in Bonald's reckoning,

> places himself by that alone in a state of revolt against society; he arrogates to himself, him a simple individual, the right of judging and reforming the world, and he aspires to dethrone universal reason in order to have his particular reason reign in its stead: this reason that he owes entirely to society since it has transmitted it to him in language, the means of all intellectual activity. 63

There is the evidence of tradition, which is the accumulation and expression of universal reason; there

62. Esquisse, p.76.
63. Recherches, Œuvres V, pp.66-67.

is the evidence of authority, which is the repository of this tradition; and the rest is silence. Universal agreement is Bonald's criterion of truth.

> A man who has ideas and sentiments which differ from those of other men ... is taken, with good reason, to be of bizarre mind..., and unsociable character..., a maniac or a fool. 64

Man has no need to seek the truth, since he has it at his finger-tips: in society, in the body of communal beliefs admitted since time immemorial. The philosophes condemned these accepted beliefs which Condorçet styled prejudices. Prejudices they may be, replies Bonald, errors or human inventions if they relate to local or particular opinions; but surely truths or "true prejudices", if they are opinions conceded by the entire human race.

> A universal prejudice is (writes Bonald) the belief in a universal truth, rather in the way a proberb is the expression of a universal truth of conduct. 65

Revelation then (revelation embodied, by the divine gift of language, in tradition), is the source from which, for Bonald, all moral and social truth derives.

64. Ibid, p. 65.
65. Ibid, p. 297.

To reject revelation is to admit that society is the work of man, that man could have created it and that man could of his own accord destroy it or reshape it; and this is to recognize the rights of the individual, to assure the triumph of the spirit of individualism and its artificial concepts. To acknowledge revelation, however, is to concede the necessity of obeying authority; and this is to assure the triumph of society over the individual, of the general will over the particular wills, of duties over rights. There, says Bonald, resuming his thought on revelation,

> there is the proof of the existence of God, the motive for man's duties, the necessity for laws and for society; there is the reason for religious power, for civil power, for domestic power, in a word, the reason for the moral and social world, which the gift of language has rescued from the abyss of ignorance and the chaos of error. 66

Not only does revelation embody all moral and social truths, continues Bonald; it embraces as well all the philosophical and scientific truths; all the general, or necessary, truths; in fact, all truths. If

66. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.183.

language were of human invention, argues Bonald,[67] there would no longer be any mathematical truths, for it is only by language and by reasoning that the mind ascertains whether lines are absolutely straight, or circles absolutely round, because the senses recognize only relatively straight lines and relatively round circles; calculation and evaluation demand both language and reasoning, for the senses identify only units. There would no longer even be historical truths, for without language man would apprehend only what he sees and feels. Absolute pyrrhonism Bonald would on no account condone. Truth is revelation incarnate, written not on the graven images of individual reason, but in the Book of Faith.

(ii) Reason

However, Condorcet's pilgrim to the Heavenly City met, neither God nor Bonald, but

> Reason... braving the executioners and resisting the tempters, crushing under its all-powerful hand, first, religious hypocrisy which demands sincere adoration for its dogmas and, then, the political hypocrisy which abjectly pleads that

67. Ibid, p.182.

> it may be allowed to
> profit in peace from
> those errors in which,
> if we are to believe it,
> it is profitable not only
> for itself but for mankind
> that mankind should be
> sunk forever. 68

In Condorçet's final stages of human progress, philosophy and the sciences shake off the yoke of authority. As a disciple of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, Condorçet was emphatic in his anti-clericalism and abhorrence of absolute monarchy, both of which he equated with the tyranny of unenlightenment. The author of the Esquisse saw in popular government and the annihilation of supernatural belief (particularly Bonald's revered Catholicism) the perfection of society.

> The relentless war that
> philosophy has declared
> upon the oppressors of
> humanity... will endure
> as long as there are
> priests and kings on
> earth, 69

warned Condorçet - which prompted Bonald to comment

> Condorçet measures the
> progress of the human
> mind by the progress of
> atheism and materialism, 70

although, of course, as Bonald is aware, Condorçet's

68. Esquisse, pp.102-3.
69. Quoted by Bonald, Œuvres IV, p.161.
70. Ibid, p.162.

declared yardstick was the progress of reason. Bonald's, on the other hand, is faith; but it was the philosophes who had declared war, and they named their own weapons: philosophy and reason. Bonald had no choice but to retaliate in kind.

> Christians (he cried),
> it is time to justify
> our faith; philosophers,
> it is time to vindicate
> your incredulity. 71

For Bonald, the superiority of religion as compared with philosophy is obvious: it stems from the superiority of God as compared with man. Human passions are an obstacle in the way of both reason and virtue. Religion places the means of restraint beyond the passions of men - with God; but philosophy has no higher court of appeal. While philosophy discusses man only in terms of his strength or of his reason, at the same time showing him only the baseness of his nature, religion warns him of his extreme weakness, all the time presenting him with an ennobling view of his nature. Religion teaches him that he is made in the image of God, but that, without God, he can be nothing; philosophy, that he is no more than a brute but that, alone and unaided, he can be everything. Religion - social by nature - is apposite to society; natural and necessary bond of human societies, of families and of States, it is the reason

71, Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.404.

for every society. Philosophy, on the contrary, isolates man and serves only to develop and satisfy his individuality:

> Philosophy, which presupposes the good man, shows only how to tolerate him; religion, which teaches that man is basically evil, prescribes that he be loved. 72

Religion strengthens the constitution of society; philosophy weakens it: the former edifies, the latter destroys. A philosophic people would be a people of "seekers", and a people, under pain of survival, must know, not seek![73] And Bonald turns to history for confirmation: the Jews and the Spartans are laudable; their strength was due to the absence of philosophy in their society. Whereas Germany, weakened by the philosophy of Frederick the Great, could not help but succumb to the radical ideas of Kant! It is not with impunity that the intellectual elite of a nation develops a curiosity for "unintelligible" principles and professes complete disdain for the "popular philosophy of common sense"! As for France, it is for Bonald the most outstanding illustration of the effects that philosophy can have on the stability of society: philosophy has dethroned all positive ideas; philosophy has banished all respect for persons and

72. "Si la philosophie est utile pour le gouvernement de la société", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.502.
73. Recherches, Œuvres V, p.46.

things which had for generations been objects of consideration; philosophy has undermined the foundations of social order - domestic, political and religious; philosophy has defied nature.

The work of philosophy thus appears to Bonald to be essentially destructive.[74] In its sole appeal to individual reason, in its spirit of free examination, it appears as nothing more than a dissolvent: dissolvent of ideas, of beliefs, of customs. By submitting to the open criticism of their personal reflection, moral and religious beliefs, political institutions, good, duty, family, and State, the philosophes of the eighteenth century have destroyed the social edifice. But accustomed to destroy, they have been powerless to reconstruct. Agreed upon the absolutely negative work of demolition, they could not agree upon the positive work of reconstruction.

Bonald repeatedly laments the fact that philosophy is no longer what it once was: wisdom, the love of wisdom, the science of things moral and abstract; that, for most, it is nothing more than the art of doing without religion.[75]

> Philosophy, which to the pagans meant "love of wisdom", means for us simply "the quest for truth", [76]

74. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.396.
75. Recherches, Œuvres V, p.36.
76. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.158.

he writes. Bonald would have the useless speculation upon facts and the laws of the physical universe revert to the study of moral man, especially social man. Bonald, in fact, would have the philosophy of Heaven return to earth. It is always with great disdain that he speaks of the natural sciences:

> The truth or falsity of opinions in physics does not determine whether society progresses forwards or backwards. 77

The physical sciences, according to Bonald, cannot make man better, or even happier: fashioned for the sole satisfaction of the needs of the body, they should not engage the attention of the philosopher who, if he wishes to avoid falling into gross materialism, must concern himself with more elevated thoughts.[78] What is needed by mortal man, to Bonald's way of thinking, is a code of laws by which to live which are rather more than mortal. Thus the contemporary philosophies with their emphasis upon physical phenomena are, for Bonald, inadequate.

> The enquiry of the philosophers of antiquity almost invariably had as its goal a code of ethics; the studies of the philosophers of the eighteenth century have been almost exclusively directed towards the physical sciences. 79

77. Ibid, p.168.
78. "Supplément", Œuvres IV, p.167.
79. "De la philosophie morale et politique du dix-huitième siècle", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.65.

And Bonald writes disparagingly of his contemporaries:

> These men seek inspiration in the structure of the organs which they submit to their dissections; and they believe they have met the master because they have, in the waiting-room, interrogated the servants. 80

Man and society, the principles of morality and political theory: these alone, to Bonald, seem to be the true object of philosophy which is love of wisdom. It is not the laws of natural science, but the natural laws of God which will result in the progress which leads to ultimate perfection:

> Those who classify human knowledge in an inverse order, by giving precedence to the physical sciences... see in ma only organs and sensations; in human relations only needs and pleasures; in society only quantity; and in the universe only matter. 81

In fact, Bonald blames the retardation of the social and moral sciences upon the inflated attention which the natural sciences had been receiving. It is certain, he writes,

80. "Réflexions philosophiques sur la tolérance des opinions", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.141.
81. "Des sciences, des lettres et des arts", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.373.

> that the centuries in which these (physical) sciences become the exclusive study, will not be centuries of eloquence, poetry, religion or morality. 82

How has it come about, he asks in the preface to the Théorie du pouvoir, that the science which is of the greatest interest to man - the science of society - lags so far behind the other sciences of the universe?[83] Man's happiness depends upon the knowledge of his goal, while the other sciences contribute nothing to his welfare and, instead, create further needs. So why is it that these truths - so important that they must be revealed - have been unappreciated for so many centuries? Why have they

> remained until now obscured by a multitude of errors? 84

There is no need, Bonald considers, to seek an explanation beyond man himself. Man has been frightened, not by the truth itself - the "speculative truth" - but by the "practical consequences" - the obstacles it would place in the way of his designs and his ambitions. He is deterred by what he does not meet in the physical sciences: duties. To avoid submitting himself to the

82. Ibid, p.374.
83. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp.11-12.
84. Ibid, p.12.

laws of God, man has rejected all belief in God. Thus, for Bonald, what has retarded the progress of the moral and social sciences is the distaste for duties and the fear of the obligations which derive from them.[85]

But if philosophy consists thus primarily, if not exclusively, in the knowledge of the moral and social truths, it becomes important for Bonald, everywhere where these truths are known, to ascertain whether they have been observed in their original purity, or whether, after having been obscured or even effaced, they have finally been unearthed. Philosophy does not exist, - it could not have existed - among the Jews who, having received directly from God the true principles of moral conduct and social life and having preserved them faithfully, by the transmission of the divine word, did not have to seek in the "vain opinions" of men what they could find in their traditions and their books.[86] Philosophy appeared (for example in the Orient and Greece) only among those peoples who, after having lost the memory of primitive traditions, after attempting to recreate them in the fantasies - as bizarre as they were puerile - of their imagination, eventually sought in their own reason

85. Ibid, pp. 13-14.
86. Recherches, Œuvres V, p. 7.

> what they could no longer recognize in the beliefs of society. [87]

From the time that, through Christ, God made known his word again to man, and placed him once again in possession of truths too long forgotten - from that time, for Bonald, philosophy was rendered useless. In effect, man had no more to seek from the moment of truth when he knew.

And what of those who are still seeking - those who, like Condorçet, are searching for that Elysium created by Reason - what is at the base of their search? asks Bonald. And replies: the pretension of opposing to the general reason of society their own individual reason, to the evidence of authority the authority of evidence, to divine reason human reason, finally - to religion, philosophy.[88]

In modern philosophy (two terms which, for Bonald, refuse to be coupled; because, in the sphere of morality, he says, every doctrine which is not as ancient as man is an error)[89] Bonald detects two schools: Ideology and Rationalism.

For Bonald, Ideology relates to every system which derives from Condillac: sensualism, materialism and,

87. Ibid, p.9.
88. Ibid, p.38.
89. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.163.

necessarily, the views of Condorçet. It is entirely in the analysis of the human mind, in the observation of thought, in a sort of "dissection of the thought processes" that Condillac and the eighteenth-century philosophes who sustain the sensualist doctrine, seek the solution of the problem of the source of knowledge. Bonald regards this procedure with hostility and scepticism. It is an impossibility, he declares: it is to expect the mind to comprehend itself. Now, the human mind, writes Bonald,[90] is only an instrument which has been given to man to enable him to understand those matters which are external to it; to expect it to comprehend itself is no less ridiculous than to argue that the eye can perceive itself without a mirror: a thankless task and one which cannot possibly produce meaningful results. By interrogating himself, man makes of himself the plaything of his own illusions,

> taking the echo of
> his own voice for
> the response of
> truth. [91]

The Ideologues, who persist in analysing their ideas in order to discover their ideas, who wish to know their minds instead of seeking to know with their minds, Bonald likens to the fools on Mount Athos who,

90. Recherches, Œuvres V, p. 41.
91. Ibid.

all their days, their eyes fixed upon their navels,

> mistook for the light
> the vertigo that this
> posture induced in them. 92

The mind is exhausted and dissipated by this sterile contemplation of itself, writes Bonald:

> Sad pastime of a timid
> mind which I would not
> dare call study and
> which renders the mind
> inept and barren. 93

The Ideologues, having reduced all philosophy to the analysis of the mind, the observation of the conscience, the contemplation of self, and seeing only man and, in man, only his ideas and his sensations, must, to Bonald's way of thinking, end in the most pointless and abject doctrine: materialism.

> By divesting man of
> everything save his
> sensations and his
> organs they have
> logically limited
> themselves to an
> anatomical study. 94

By emphasizing the individual's consideration of himself at the expense of forfeiting his awareness of his relationships with his fellow-men, they have destroyed "the moral and social being" in him, and

92. Ibid, p.42.
93. Ibid.
94. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.190.

have led him finally, in morality to egoism, in politics to isolation.

A purely rational solution, however, could not satisfy Bonald, in spite of the glowing tributes which he pays to the great rationalists. The cult of Reason has its dangers, as Bonald is aware. In the notion of ideas inherent in the mind of each, Bonald detects the flaw of personal inspiration: the possibility of substituting for supernatural revelation, revelation which is entirely natural; for the word of God, the voice of conscience.[95]

It is not in philosophy (even in a philosophy liberally spiced with religion, like that of Malebranche or Leibnitz) but in religion itself, that the solution is to be found. Many have sought it, writes Bonald, but far away -

> in the inaccessible
> heights of pure
> intellect [96]

when all the time it is close at hand. Religion

> placed it in the
> hands of the world
> and in the mouths
> of babes. [97]

Revelation provides the key to the enigma. Ideas are

95. Ibid, p.169.
96. Ibid, pp.170-171.
97. Ibid.

innate, beyond question; but they are inherent in society - not in man.[98]

In the final analysis, despite their differences, the Ideologues and the Rationalists have one common assumption - faith in individual reason - which is the core of all "modern philosophy". But, objects Bonald, the result of this assumption is a multiplicity and variety of incompatible systems. Each philosopher supersedes his predecessors until he, in his turn, is supplanted: Descartes after Bacon, Malebranche and Spinoza, and Leibnitz after Descartes, Kant after them;[99] if philosophy is always awaiting a new reformer, how can it ever be definitive? Philosophy, as Bonald saw it, spoke not with the mouth of God but with the tongues of men, and to Bonald the fact that their number was legion was in itself sufficient proof of philosophy's inherent weakness. Plato and Aristotle asked themselves: What is wisdom? What is knowledge? And after so many centuries of reflection, observation and experience,

> we who are so proud
> of the "progress of
> the human mind", we
> have not come any
> closer to answering
> their questions. [100]

There are philosophers, but there is not one philosophy.

98. Ibid, p.172.
99. Recherches, Œuvres V, pp.36-37.
100. Ibid, p.37.

And Bonald finds inexcusable evidence of this in the fact that the body charged with the direction and surveillance of public instruction, the University of France, in compiling the programmes and the methods of instruction, is content, for philosophy, to allocate indiscriminately to the masters the best works of all the philosophical schools: the treatises of Bacon with those of Descartes, Locke with Malebranche, Condillac beside Leibnitz.[101] This, to Bonald's way of thinking, is a comment upon the fact that there is not, either in France or in Europe,

> any system of philosophy that is so universally accredited that it can be adopted to the exclusion of all others. 102

So - argues Bonald - all philosophical reasoning is transient and cannot claim immortality for its conclusions: Pythagoras and Thales, Zeno and Epicurus, Bacon and Descartes, are all in fundamental conflict.[103] The philosophes are transgressors in the human sin of fallibility:

> ... limited in their foresight and by the duration of their lives, they could not perceive the implications of their theories. 104

101. Ibid, p.38.
102. Ibid, pp.31-32.
103. Ibid, pp.10-13.
104. "De la philosophie morale et politique du dix-huitième siècle", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.67.

But Bonald? Bonald is absolved, for he writes, not the words of Bonald, but conclusively and unadorned, the words of God. For the faithful, the argument is above reproach, but it was the infidels at whom Bonald's didactic mission was aimed. They had divested philosophy of its Christian accoutrements and left it to wander in disbelieving nakedness:

> The philosophy of the moderns is an essentially atheistic philosophy; atheistic in principle for some, who deny all existence of a supreme Being; atheistic in consequence for others, who deny his works in society and his presence amongst men. 105

But the infidels had at least succeeded in dictating the terms of debate. Bonald had become enmeshed in the web which the opposition had woven for him; in order to strengthen in their eyes his proposition: that philosophy and individualism are to anarchy as Catholicism is to perfect harmony, Bonald had resorted to philosophy's own weapon - reason. Even Bonald's own declarations divulge his ironic dilemma. Bonald does not even begin, as he might have done, by invoking the authority of the Gospel; the Bible, in fact, serves Bonald merely as

105. Ibid, p.66.

confirmation of the premisses he has established by reasoning. This fusion or, more precisely, confusion of philosophy and religion is evident in the very name - "religious philosophy"[106] - by which Bonald designates his doctrine. As Mme de Stael wryly observed:

> (Louis de Bonald) is the most philosophic of writers, with the minimum of philosophy. 107

(iii) Education

To Condorcet, of all man's imprescriptable rights, education was perhaps the most fundamental. If happiness depended upon the progress of reason, perfection - or universal enlightenment - demanded universal education. And, incongruous as it may seem, perfection and enlightenment in Bonald's plan also became synonymous with education. Once Bonald had confessed that ideas are inherent in society and not in man; that, if man is to know the moral truths he must be taught them, then Bonald, too, was committed to a programme of universal education.

> All my writings will have been justified if I have proved the necessity for education, 108

106. Principe constitutif, Œuvres VIII, p.16.
107. "Observations sur l'ouvrage de Mme la baronne de Staël", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.620.
108. "De l'éducation dans la société", Œuvres II, p.208.

he wrote. And added by way of epigraph a quotation from Leibnitz:

> I have always thought
> that one could reform
> the human race, if one
> could reform the education
> of its youth. 109

Education is, in Bonald's view, the incumbent duty of the State. Man, naturally depraved, corrupts, or tends to corrupt, the government; it is necessary therefore to perfect man before permitting him to govern. And perfection presupposes education.

To Condorçet's question:

> Has not printing freed
> the education of the
> people from all political
> and religious shackles? 110

Bonald replies adamantly in the negative. The Revolution, to Bonald's mind,[111] made a great mistake, in the organization of education, of confusing the different societies to which man belongs; of not distinguishing between man in the family and man in the State, man in his private capacity and man in his public role. And the result of this confusion was a system of education which, planned for all the world in general, was suited to no-one in particular. As for

109. Ibid, p. 207.
110. Esquisse, p. 102.
111. "De l'éducation dans la société", Œuvres II, p. 208.

the Emiles of this world - Bonald considers that to follow the Enlightenment's educational methods is to produce naturalists at eight years and atheists at twenty.[112] The question of what education a man should receive is answered by the society for which he must be fitted, the milieu in which he will have to apply his knowledge and talents. If he is destined by birth or choice to fill a public profession, he must receive a public or social education. If he is destined to follow a private occupation (as in the case of the weaker sex) he should receive only a domestic or particular education. There is then, in Bonald's scheme, on the one hand social or public education which man receives in and for the State, and on the other, domestic or particular education which man receives in and for the family. Religion being inseparable from both the family and the State, both systems must be religious.

For all, domestic education precedes social education: the former (which trains the child to accept his role in the family hierarchy) continues until his eleventh year; the latter (which trains him to live in harmony with his equals) continues until his eighteenth year. The first is the responsibility of

112. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.173.

the parents; but the last is a public trust. To rear social men - men who are to form society - is to rear society. And society is perpetual, universal and uniform; therefore what is required is a teaching order ("corps") which is perpetual, universal and uniform. No secular body would fulfil these conditions, so that, concludes Bonald,[113] education must be entrusted to a religious body - an order. This will ensure - and Bonald favours this - that from Brest to Strasbourg and Dunkirk to Perpignan, instruction will be uniform. The only task of the Minister of Education will be to prevent innovation. The expenses of education may be high, Bonald concedes, but they are necessary, which to Bonald means they are practicable. As for subjects - Bonald recommends, naturally (since they are the vehicle of tradition) languages - that is, French and Latin - the latter since it is the language of the Christian religion. Bonald does not see the necessity for encumbering the memory with a multitude of facts -

> Botany, zoology, anatomy,
> mineralogy and chemistry
> are not absolute necessities - [114]

- which develop neither the mind nor the heart. Education is not designed to produce scholars but rather men capable of learning; for the final instruction, the

113. Œuvres II, p. 249.
114. Ibid, p. 260.

practical professional training, is received only within the profession itself. At eighteen, writes Bonald,[115] one knows nothing: but this is not ignorance; it is the beginning of knowing.

* * * * * *

With a doctrine of progress and earthly perfectibility, attained through the medium of universal education which disseminates truth, and argued with all the devices of rationalism, Bonald has succeeded in contradicting Condorçet on his own terms, only to reveal that feudalism and Catholicism were not always amenable to the Enlightenment's terms - even when those terms were redefined. It remained for Auguste Comte to provide a new and meaningful synthesis.

115. Ibid, p. 267.

— SECTION V —

VOLTAIRE and HISTORY

In Voltaire, Bonald considers,[1] an astonished and concerned world saw, for the first time, a writer break completely with the principles which, since the beginning of time, had governed families and directed the evolution of States:

> Not deigning even to consult the nations or the centuries, but on the sole authority of his young reason, (Voltaire) blighted by ridicule the most accredited beliefs of the most enlightened people. [2]

Voltaire is convinced that the first two estates of France - the most sacred and the most sensible orders, in Bonald's opinion - are composed of nothing but slight, feeble, and credulous minds.[3] Such an attitude must, Bonald conjectures, be due to the impression which the disorders of the Regency made upon Voltaire's

1. "Des écrits de Voltaire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.10.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, p.8.

youth. Voltaire's entire life has been one long parody of respectability.[4] And, Bonald continues, despite the fact that Voltaire has exercised such a prodigious influence over his contemporaries, all his works are rendered superficial by his obsessive hatred of Christianity: his manner of writing history is marred by a display of historical erudition which lacks depth, gravity, and authority.[5] In Voltaire's hands, the history of religion becomes merely the history of a few popes; the history of nations is reduced to the history of a few leaders; and the history of society is only the history of a handful of people. In place of events, anecdotes; instead of reflections, epigrams: everywhere - chance, vice, and disorder which reflects Voltaire's commitment to the passions of men. This method, Bonald claims, gives to Voltaire's histories a querulous and disappointed air, unsuited to the dignity and impartiality of the discipline. Voltaire's history resembles more the "Secret Memoirs of a Malcontent" than the public annals of peoples and times.[6] Voltaire, Bonald concludes, must be held responsible for the misfortunes of Europe and of France. But his flippant raillery will not survive; his glory will fade: born with his century, he will vanish with it likewise.[7] Bonald, on the other

4. Ibid, pp. 14-15.
5. Ibid, p. 15.
6. Ibid, p. 17.
7. Ibid, p. 23.

hand, was determined to produce a history of peoples and times which would live forever. And, in the prologue to the Législation primitive, Bonald declares his intention to present for modern history what Bossuet had offered for ancient history - the general, historical pattern of causation behind world events: the explanation of the "secret liaison" between the past, the present and the future as society struggles to realize itself.[8] It is society - not man - through which Bonald's history operates.

To allay the detrimental effects of the history which the Enlightenment produced, the very pivotal point of argument must be radically changed, Bonald condiders. Voltaire and his disciples observed only individuals when, really, it is society which should be observed. They saw only the elements of the social organism, instead of the organism itself. They proceeded from individuals to society rather than from society to individuals.[9]

In religion, they saw only individuals, and worse, equal individuals: by renouncing the body of priests specially consecrated and distinct from the faithful, the sacrifice, and religious observance, they arrived at a religion which is wholly individual - deism,

8. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.155.
9. "Du perfectionnement de l'homme", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, pp.516-517.

and deism is only nascent atheism disguised. In the family, they saw only individuals, equal individuals, each entitled to his particular will and rights: by denying a general power, a fixed authority, and true conjugal union, they arrived at divorce. In the State, they saw only individuals, all equal and having the same rights: instead of holding to unity and fixity of power, and social distinctions, they arrived at theories of the rights of man, of a social contract, and the sovereignty of the people. But Bonald sets out to offer the complete antithesis of this. In the State, in the family, and in religion, he considers only society. The individual exists only by virtue of society: it is society which makes him and perfects him; it is society which "constitutes" him, that is, which gives him his constitution, his proper state. And society forms him only for herself.[10] The personality of the individual is submerged in the social group to which he belongs and from which he must no longer - indeed, can no longer - be detached; for man, Bonald is adamant, cannot struggle against society.[11] Speaking of marriage, Bonald says that, once united, the parties lose their individuality, and no longer

10. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.10.
11. "Du perfectionnement de l'homme", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.518.

possess particular wills:

> In marriage there are
> no longer individuals. 12

It is equally true, in Bonald's opinion, in religious society and political society: in one as in the other, the individual is integrated and therefore disappears. Thus it is against the natural order of things to consider man apart from, and above, society.

To consider the individual above society is to exaggerate his worth, to deem him naturally good, and to free him from all restraint other than his own conscience. And this is to misconstrue the nature of man; man is, if not fundamentally bad, at least weak, subject to his passions, sometimes even perverted and corrupt. To consider the individual above society is to attribute to him inherent and natural rights, to make of these rights - natural to man but foreign to society - a solemn declaration, and by this "foolish chatter"[13] dissuade the individual from respect for his duties, inflate his pride and goad him into revolt against society. To consider the individual above society is to see society as the work of individuals, and to recognize their right to pass judgment upon it, to reform it.

12. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p.396.
13. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.55.

Individualism is the cause of all revolutions: the religious revolution of the sixteenth century no less than the political revolution of the eighteenth century.

> The Revolution began with the Declaration of the Rights of Man. It will end only with the Declaration of the Rights of God. 14

For nature sooner or later exacts her revenge and returns society to its natural state - by a series of upheavals designed, it seems to Bonald, to expel the injurious principle introduced by human intervention. A revolution, says Bonald,

> is only the effort that nature makes to pass from a provisional state - a state contrary to nature - to a fixed, and therefore natural, state; thereby bringing men into line with nature. 15

When the individual bows before society; when he resumes his true place in the social groups (State, family and religion) to which he belongs by birth; when man ceases to oppose nature; when, in fact, mankind sacrifices for ever this individualism which is the error of the Reformation, and of the eighteenth

14. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 250.
15. "Du traité de Westphalie", Œuvres II, p. 429.

century - then the laws, temporarily deflected by human perversity, will return to their natural course; between the past and the present, the traditions momentarily interrupted will be renewed, and the social edifice will be restored on its ancient foundations.

Bonald's answer to the complex problem inherent in the work of the historian - how far man makes history or history makes the man - is thus a simple one: God made man and God's law is history. The individual's role in history is a passive one, one which cannot be said even to exist except as part of society's role. But if Bonald is the great exponent of the primacy of the corporate society, he is no less the spokesman for the consequences of Original Sin. Royer-Collard felt the fundamental weakness in this point of view. According to the theocrats, he wrote,

> there was a lack of
> foresight on the great
> day of Creation in
> allowing man to escape,
> free and intelligent,
> into the Universe...
> A higher wisdom seeks
> to restrain this
> imprudent liberty. 16

There is, in Bonald's argument, a duality: on the one hand the individual is represented merely as a negative

16. P.A. de Barante, Vie politique de Royer-Collard (Paris, 1857), II, p. 291; Charlotte Muret, French Royalist Doctrines since the Revolution (New York, 1933), p. 52.

quantity in the historical process; on the other he is considered to have a detrimental effect upon it. The ambiguity, and Bonald's solution, are evident in his treatment of Voltaire. Far from denying Voltaire's influence and achievements, Bonald emphasizes the impact of his genius. Bonald, for example, refers to Voltaire's "extraordinary" talent and the great influence which he exercised over his contemporaries. A writer of Voltaire's calibre can, Bonald deems,

> not only exert a great intellectual influence, but can become, in some respects, a veritable power in society. Voltaire was fortunate in possessing all the hallmarks of success. 17

And yet, Bonald maintains, all history is subject to divine determinism:

> In society when an important question is raised or a new principle introduced, one can be sure that there is a profound and natural reason for it, not so much in the state of mind as in the general state of affairs, and that it is a necessity of society rather than a system devised by man. 18

17. "Des écrits de Voltaire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.7.
18. "Opinion sur le projet de loi relatif aux Journaux", Œuvres VI, p.363.

Simultaneously, Voltaire is cast as the villain of the piece, the producer of the Revolution, and the Divine understudy. As far as Bonald is concerned, this tableau explains the Revolution; but it does not explain Voltaire. Hardly in a position to reject Voltaire's influence without jeopardising his own didactic purpose concerning the end and means of history, Bonald vacillates between the impotence of the individual and his detrimental propensity. In Carlyle-like dimensions, Voltaire is depicted as the 'deus ex machina' of the Revolution:

> In that century which, in France, opened with a revolution in customs and ended with a revolution in laws, Voltaire, who lived through both, was instrumental in prolonging the one and preparing for the other. 19

The concept of Voltaire as the instigator of the Revolution has introduced a new and radical element into Bonald's anti-individualist argument. The implication is that here is one individual at least - (and there had been others, like Luther and Bonaparte) - who is capable of directing the course of history in un-Godly channels. Caught between the two seemingly incompatible metaphors of the gloved hand of the Lord

19. "Des écrits de Voltaire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p. 22.

and Voltaire as France's version of the Trojan horse, Bonald resolves the contradiction by subordinating the ephemeral nature of the individual to the immortal nature of God:

> Voltaire is responsible for the misfortunes of France (but) his glory will fade; born with his century, he will vanish with it likewise. 20

For Bonald, the sway of necessity in human affairs is absolute. The dilemma is obvious: everything that is necessary must be equated with that which is divine, unless the argument is to defeat itself. Further, since all causation must be attributed to the prime cause - God - absolutely everything that is, is both necessary and divine. Whence follows Bonald's optimistic historical doctrine; there is no room for pessimism since all historical events must be attributed to God's universal plan for the indefinite perfectibility of mankind. As to chance - Bonald concurs with Leibnitz -

> chance is only ignorance of the natural laws. 21

20. Ibid, p. 23. One critic has perceived in this train of thought a certain relativism in Bonald's historical view. (See M.H. Quinlan, The Historical Thought of the Vicomte de Bonald). This should not be taken as an inconsistency, however. Whatever relativistic moments Bonald may have serve only to emphasize his absolutist dogma, at least after 1801, when Bonald broke with the orthodox conception of static revelation in favour of a more malleable one.
21. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 293.

Not that this argument is unique to the orthodox believers. Voltaire himself wrote:

> Chance is a word void of sense; nothing can exist without a cause. The world is arranged according to mathematical laws; therefore it is arranged by an intelligence. 22

And it was Voltaire who remarked that what is not in nature is never true - which elicited Grimm's rejoinder:

> But what is nature? Is it not everything that is? And does not what exists exist of necessity? How can anything be contrary to nature? 23

The answer was, of course, clearer to Christians than to Unbelievers who had rejected the notion of Original Sin. And Bonald circumvents the difficulties of "whatever is, is right" with the argument: whatever endures, must be right.

The best guarantee of the truth, the infallible and objective criterion, is, in Bonald's eyes, success. Utility and truth, in fact, tend to be confused by Bonald. Citing the maxim current in the eighteenth century, but too often employed, in Bonald's view, in the service of error - "all truths are useful to men" -

22. Dictionnaire philosophique, Vol. V, p. 234.
23. R. R. Palmer, Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France (New York, 1961) p. 210.

he declares it to be valid, because

> everything that is
> useful to man is
> a truth. 24

Success and strength are indications of truth far more valid than logical argument. Bonald sees in the strength and survival of the Christian nations the most shining evidence of the worth of their legislation and of the truth of the principles upon which this legislation is based. And, he demands of those who, like Voltaire, would ridicule the miraculous and the supernatural:

> Compared with the
> social proofs of the
> truth of the sacred
> books, what are the
> lucubrations of critics
> regarding their factual
> authenticity? 25

In success Bonald discerns the stamp of divinity: what succeeds is true and comes from God.

> Show me (he adds)
> societies as strong
> in all ways as the
> Judaic and Christian
> societies, and I will
> believe in the divinity
> of their legislation. 26

Above rational demonstration Bonald places social

24. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, pp. 15-16.
25. Législation primitive, Œuvres I, p. 258.
26. Ibid, pp. 258-259.

demonstration - the proof of social utility. Bonald invokes this utility in favour of the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the highest philosophic and moral truths. He invokes it to explain, in peremptory fashion, the pattern of divine causation and human endeavour. The necessity or the impossibility of events depends upon their congruence or incongruence with the natural order of society. The true, the real even, are thus subordinated to the necessary, the useful. In another century, it might have been termed pragmatism.

Having contested the eighteenth-century's confidence in the individual's capacity to make or to deny history - with, strangely enough, the example of Voltaire himself - Bonald proceeded to establish his own philosophy of history. There are, Bonald considers, two principal methods of writing history. Either it can be written in all its details: this is the method of Rollin, Crévier and Le Beau; or it can be written in such a way that the details are reduced to a minimum in order to emphasize the general facts, that is,

> the causes behind events,
> their synthesis and
> their results. 27

27. "De la manière d'écrire l'histoire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.402.

This is the method of Bossuet and Fleury. And this is the method particularly valuable for statesmen, Bonald considers, for it demands the exercise of judgment and reflection. It is Bonald's choice. He inclines towards a philosophy of history in which facts and names have no place: Bonald believes that

> it is possible to write the history of a society without naming any of the kings who have governed it. 28

Philosophy of history, Bonald emphasizes, must on no account be confused with philosophic history as the eighteenth century saw it. In this century of philosophy, says Bonald, all knowledge must be philosophic, or it does not merit the title of knowledge. History is no exception: were it exact in the recital of facts, methodic in their use, considered in its reflections, and yet not philosophic, the eighteenth century would see in it

> only a boring and useless gazette. 29

Philosophy being the search for causes and their relation to effects, it would be logical to assume that the most philosophic history would be

28. Ibid, p. 415.
29. Ibid, p. 406.

> that which presents a general survey of the facts, uncovers their causes, indicates their relationships, and derives from this knowledge general reflections on the religious and political order of society. 30

But no. Instead, philosophic history, to this century, has consisted of exceptions to the rules, of particular and isolated facts, of anecdotes; everything has been particular and even personal; the only general theme has been

> a spirit of hatred and censure of modern religion and political theory. 31

Preference is always given to ancient governments rather than to modern governments, and to paganism rather than to Christianity. Popes and kings are invariably presented as the enemies of progress, and artists, industrialists and merchants as the pioneers of civilization. All of which is certainly not Bonald's idea of "truly philosophic history". Bonald takes as his model Bossuet's Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle. He considers that Bossuet's manner of regarding events,

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.

> of capturing the spirit
> and the totality, of
> bringing the whole to
> a general point of view, 32

could be successfully applied to the political history of societies. It is necessary to lay aside particular facts and particular men, even those who hold important positions, in order to view the entirety or the sum of facts and men: from this general perspective principles will emerge which will have the double advantage of dispensing with the necessity for knowing factual detail and of supplying

> rules which are applicable
> to all historical
> circumstances and to
> the conduct of governments. 33

Then history, in Bonald's opinion, will be truly philosophic: less charged with details, it will be more fecund in observations and results.

And Bonald believes that in his truly philosophic history he has produced a comprehensive denial of the history which the Enlightenment had yielded. In reply to Voltaire's Essai sur l'Histoire Générale, Bonald cites his exemplar, Bossuet:

> One can make of the history
> of all peoples nothing but
> a collection - or a confusion -
> of individual histories (if

32. Ibid, p.405.
33. Ibid, p.411.

> one only narrates facts); yet from the history of a single people, or even from the development of a single fact, one can create a general or even universal history; and that is what Bossuet has done by equating the history of the human race with that of the People of God, and subordinating all great historic events to the sole fact of the establishment of Christianity. 34

Then, and only then, is history capable of fulfilling its most elevated purpose - instructing both men and kings. And yet Bonald's insistence upon truly philosophic history: history which places emphasis on cause and effect, and which has as its end comprehension rather than narration, in which facts are significant only insofar as they contribute to an understanding of the pattern of general development, calls to mind Voltaire's famous advice to the historian:

> If you have nothing to tell us but that (on the banks of the Oxus or Jaxartes) one barbarian has been succeeded by another barbarian, in what respect do you benefit the public? 35

34. "Des écrits de Voltaire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.16.
35. Dictionnaire philosophique, Vol. IV, p. 70.

Indeed, it would not be an unfair question to ask at this juncture whether it is really Bossuet's methods that Bonald admires - so much as Bossuet's conclusions? More than fifty years before Bonald first took up his pen, Voltaire had written:

> Woe to details. They are a vermin that destroys great works... 36
> ... public faults, prevarications, and injustices... They cannot be too much exposed; they are beacons which warn these always-existing bodies against splitting again on similar rocks. 37

But Bonald refuses to acknowledge that, in this respect, Voltaire's philosophy of history is in accord with his own. No sooner has he attacked Voltaire:

> The most important piece of historical writing among the works of M. de Voltaire is his Essai sur l'Histoire Générale... (but) he should bear in mind that it is not possible to make a general history simply by accumulating facts; one must draw generalizations from them... 38

36. Lettre à J.B. Dubois, 3 Oct. 1738, Œuvres (1877-85) XXXV, p. 30; A. Cobban, In Search of Humanity, p. 109.
37. Dictionnaire philosophique, Vol. IV, p. 47.
38. "Des écrits de Voltaire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p. 16.

than he contradicts himself by admitting that Voltaire does, after all, depict a trend:

> ... the general theme of Voltaire's Essai is that religion has been the cause of all the evils and disorders of the universe.... 39

In fact, the Essai is just as didactic as Bonald's Théorie du pouvoir, and was conceived as a refutation of Bossuet's Histoire Universelle.

Bonald, it is clear, is criticizing Voltaire's methods on the basis of his conclusions. Voltaire's historical pattern, writes Bonald,

> is sad and false; it denies God and destroys the basis of society. Evil, however wide-spread it may be, is only a flaw, an exception, and cannot be the subject of a general history. Thus Voltaire's so-called "general" Essai is really particular and partial. 40

In Bonald's list of historians who, in their capacity as advisers to the throne, have imparted

> ... those ideas by which those who govern may know whence they came and whither they are going, 41

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid, pp.16-17.
41. "De la manière d'écrire l'histoire", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.422.

Bossuet and Fleury, as upholders of French royal absolutism, are prominent. On the other hand, Machiavelli and Voltaire are conspicuous by their absence. It must be concluded that, in Bonald's opinion, what the historian told the prince was rather more important than the manner of the telling.

The study of history is, Bonald claims, more instructive in its lessons than the study of philosophy. And he opposes it to the hypotheses and systems of man:

> It is not the systems of philosophers which should be consulted, but the testimony of history. 42

In fact, Bonald places history above all reasoning, all theories and all philosophy. If, he writes,

> I were to establish a political theory on general or abstract propositions, and substantiate it in history, it would not be sufficient, in contesting it, to oppose the propositions by propositions, or the reasoning by reasoning. It would be necessary to oppose the facts by facts, and history by history. 43

42. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 20.
43. Ibid, p. 21.

Bonald's espousal of the authority of history has twentieth-century overtones; and yet to the question posed by Voltaire in the Dictionnaire philosophique:

> Should the duty of an historian prevail over the higher and more imperative duty of a man? 44

Bonald replies adamantly in the negative. He belonged - along with his adversary - to the moralist school of eighteenth-century historical thinkers who continued to regard history as philosophy teaching by examples. This attitude is the key to the historical writings of almost an entire century, during which history became but another weapon in the unholy war. Despite Bacon and Descartes, Bolingbroke's definition was still the operative one. The aim of these philosopher-historians was none other than to reconcile experience with truth - revealed or otherwise. Thus, to Gaillard's expressed wish that the historian could look upon history with an impassive countenance, unimpaired by religious and political pre-conceptions, Bonald replies:

> This "apathie sublime", very different from impartiality, which is the first duty of the historian, indicates only an extreme indifference

44. Vol. IV, p. 65.

> for all opinions true
> or false, or else an
> abysmal ignorance of the
> truth, and can only prolong
> the errors of society.
> A writer must have, in the
> realms of morals and
> politics, decided opinions -
> because he must look upon
> himself as a preceptor
> of men. 45

It should never be forgotten that Bonald's first work, the Théorie du pouvoir, appeared in 1796. Written in exile in Heidelberg by an émigré noble at the height of the Terror, it would have been extraordinary had it not reflected the particular animosity engendered by the author's involvement in the particular circumstances of the Revolution. It is hardly too much to say that, had the Revolution not occurred, Bonald would not have been motivated to write his Théorie du pouvoir at all; an hypothesis, it is true, but the fact remains that Bonald, while claiming for his work the immortality due to the universal and the abiding, never really escaped from his particular obsession - the French Revolution. His failure to transcend the Revolutionary experience is as much a comment as a criticism; but its existence belies Bonald's claim that he studied history for its own sake.[46] Rather, Bonald searched

45. Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p. 424.
46. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p. 21.

history for the sake of the Counter-Revolution. His unhistorical approach is made explicit in the first book of the Législation primitive. The third chapter is entitled "Concerning Truth and Reason" - a title carefully chosen to demonstrate the fallacy of the author of the book, "Concerning Reason and Truth" -

> ... a defective title, because truth precedes reason in order to shape it. 47

The Cartesian scientific method, therefore, which begins in doubt, applicable as it is to the physical sciences, cannot be extended to the moral sciences where to begin in doubt is to end in doubt:

> One cannot reject, under pretext of error, all moral belief without destroying at the same time in man and in society the motive or the practice of moral actions... (which cannot but lead to) the bottomless abyss of absolute pyrrhonism. 48

Bonald and Voltaire were, both of them, propagandists and moralists - preceptors of men; whose methods, in the heat of controversy, became more polemical as they became less historical. Both assert that the historian should strive for impartiality, but both, when it

47. Œuvres I, p. 298, note.
48. Ibid, p. 167.

comes to the point of actually defining history, reveal the degree of their involvement in the wider eighteenth-century controversy. What, asks Voltaire, would constitute useful history? And replies:

> That which should teach
> us our duties and our
> rights without appearing
> to teach them. 49

And so they started out, both armies flying the flag of impartiality, on their crusades for morality.

History, then, is Bonald's court of appeal. It is in history that he seeks the confirmation and application of his doctrine: the fundamental, natural laws of the constitution, government, and administration of societies. Beginning, certainly, in the manner of his century, with an abstract exposition of principles, his work nevertheless receives animation from his highly subjective, colourful use of history. In particular, it is in French history that he seeks validation for the principles of natural law which he has advanced: to the collective, natural, social unit - the nation - when he requires substantiation for his own principles, and to the single, perverted, anarchic unit - the individual - when he requires falsification of others'. To conclude this study of Bonald's doctrine, perhaps it would be appropriate to review Bonald's own essays as an historian, to compile

49. Dictionnaire philosophique, Vol. IV, p. 57.

Bonald's own (albeit at times hypothetical) history of France, which should shed much light both on his methods and on his principles.

The state of Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century, writes Bonald,[50] can only be understood by turning back one hundred and fifty years to the Treaty of Westphalia - bearing in mind, of course, the natural and necessary laws of history.

Every social group, he recapitulates,[51] at least every social group whose constitution is based upon the natural order of things, passes, like man, from a state of infancy and growth to a state of virility and preservation. This natural tendency to develop necessarily produces antagonism between nations and, in their conflicts, those which have been established by man disappear, while those which have been constituted by nature - that is, those which obey the natural laws of history - survive and increase until they attain in territory and population sufficient intrinsic strength to sustain in themselves the principle of their preservation. There is for each nation a boundary fixed by nature: limits (for example, seas, rivers, mountains, and even languages)[52] that the ambition of men can certainly surmount, but beyond which permanent

50. "Du Traité de Westphalie et de celui de Campo-Formio", Œuvres II.
51. Ibid, pp. 411-412.
52. Ibid, p. 412.

claims can never be made. Once a nation arrives at these limits, it becomes fixed; henceforth it ceases to be a danger to other nations. It will never again attack, because it has nothing more to acquire and, unless (as in Poland) it harbours a destructive principle within its constitution, it will never again have the fear of being destroyed by conquest.

It is by virtue of these natural principles that the Spanish nation is composed of the aggregation of many kingdoms, Great Britain of the conjunction of three countries and France of the reunion of many feudal domains; it is by virtue of these principles that Germany and Italy strive to unify their estranged nations and (Bonald has no compunction in prophesying)[53] that Portugal must one day be reabsorbed into Spain and that Holland, dissevered from Gaul and Germany, must sooner or later be shared between them.

Of all the societies of Europe none was given greater power of expansion than France because, says Bonald,[54] none had laws more natural, traditions more enduring, or geographical boundaries more determined. France will not - indeed, must not - desist until she has attained these natural limits: the Alps, the Ocean, the Mediterranean, the Pyrenees and the Rhine, which,

53. Ibid, p. 413.
54. Ibid, p. 414.

Bonald declares, is "France's natural boundary" to the north.[55] But the Treaty of Westphalia, sullied already, in Bonald's eyes, by the terms which gave official recognition to democratic and protestant States, has, moreover, prevented France in her natural efforts to expand by guaranteeing the integrity of German territory and ceding Germany Belgium, which by nature belongs to France. By disregarding the natural destiny of France, the Treaty of Westphalia has, Bonald maintains, thrown Europe into a state of "general revolution".[56] And in this temporary aberration - the mistake of the peace-makers of 1648 - Europe had to aspire to raise herself to the fixed, natural and definitive state. It was left to the Treaty of Campo-Formio[57] to establish this or at least to prepare the way, by giving to the States their constitution and their natural boundaries, or rather, putting them in a position to attain them one day. Since the cession of Belgium, Austria has not seemed to be opposed to the expansion of France to the Rhine. A rapprochement has thus become possible between the two great monarchic and Catholic powers of Europe, which, their interests no longer opposed, can find only a reason for greater understanding in the identity of their political and religious constitutions. A similar

55. Ibid, p.416.
56. Ibid, p.429.
57. Ibid, p.430.

rapprochement, based upon a similar affinity of constitutions, must eventually be established with Spain and with Italy. And then there will be - Bonald's dream - the union of the four powers of the South as opposed to the four powers of the North - England, Sweden, Prussia and Russia. This confrontation of forces seems to Bonald to be in perfect harmony with the plan of the Creator, who decreed

> that the North should have the population and the workshops of the world and the South the ascendancy of culture and civilization... 58

This confrontation will put an end to the retrograde work of the Treaty of Westphalia: the democratic States will disappear, the aristocratic States will be weakened, and monarchy will reassert its natural supremacy. Ultimately the natural, divine, historical laws of Louis de Bonald will result in complete affinity between political and religious societies, - in the return of Europe to religious unity.[59]

The illusions of Bonald concerning this harmony and the "definitive" state of Europe were soon rudely shattered, however, and by France herself: Napoleon's imperial France belied Bonald's principle that a nation

58. Ibid, p. 435.
59. Ibid, p. 436.

which has attained or is within sight of attaining its natural boundaries, loses all motive for aggression. Nevertheless, Bonald clings to it tenaciously and, in an article written on the eve of the Treaty of Tilsit,[60] he presents the hegemony that the war will assure France as the result of nature itself, which feels repugnance to all system of harmony or balance of power.

This system, this power-balance which has been receiving much attention, Bonald regards as an invention of the eighteenth century philosophes. They saw everywhere, he writes, harmony and equilibrium: in the universe, harmony and equilibrium between inconsistent beings and elements; in the political sphere, between antagonistic powers; in man himself, between contradictory passions: all of which is contrary to nature. Nature establishes everywhere superior powers, and constitutes man, the State, the political world, and universe, not by the balancing of opposed forces but, to the contrary, by a unique direction of common forces:[61] man, by subordinating his passions to the power of his reason; the State, by subordinating all men to the power of one man; the political world, by subordinating all peoples to the power of one people; the universe finally

60. "L'équilibre de Europe"; also "De l'Unité Religieuse en Europe", Mélanges, Œuvres VII.
61. "De l'Unité Religieuse en Europe", Mélanges, Œuvres VII, p.168.

by subordinating all beings to the power of one being - the Supreme Being. There is true harmony: in subordination. A balance of powers is a complete and dangerous fallacy.

It is thus in the name of his fundamental principle of the unity of power that Bonald combats the idea of a political balance in Europe.[62] The contemporary interpretation, as Bonald understands it, comprehends a state of affairs produced when one nation or alliance, balanced by another nation or alliance with equal means and resources, are at peace on account of the equality of forces which could mutually destroy one another. This is, Bonald considers, the application to political theory of an idea borrowed from mechanics; the desire to make of society a machine strikes Bonald as typical of the century which had reduced man to a robot. The eighteenth century had seen in society only physical forces, and had overlooked the most potent forces of all, whose influence may be traced in every civilization: the moral force of character, of genius, and of wisdom.[63]

Upon such purely physical data as population figures, finances, and soil surveys, there does not - and there cannot - exist two nations which are perfectly equal and therefore perfectly balanced. But supposing

62. Ibid, p. 197.
63. Ibid, p. 201.

this equilibrium were possible, it still does not take into account the superiority that a man of genius or an outstanding general - an Alexander, a Hannibal, a Caesar, or a Richelieu - bestows; or, to take a more recent example: (the most brilliant, says Bonald, which the history of societies could cite) the man who at this moment governs France and leads her to European domination.[64] There is there a moral force which cannot be estimated by any preconceived system of checks and balances, because it does not lend itself to calculation. Moreover, these outstanding men have appeared but rarely, sometimes in one nation, sometimes in another, and less to maintain the status quo than to reestablish power.

Thus, concludes Bonald, equilibrium has no part in the natural system for the government of societies. And he turns once again to the history of France to support his thesis. Destined to inherit the heritage of Rome and to exercise in the Christian world, by the ascendancy of its enlightenment and civilization, the supremacy that the ancient capital had secured by force of arms in the pagan world, France has been halted in her progress towards her natural political and religious destiny only by the checks which, in the course of the centuries, have been placed upon her power: sometimes

64. Ibid, p. 200-01.

internally, sometimes externally. With Charlemagne, France, so to speak, mounted the throne of Europe, but she was soon dethroned (without losing, it is true, he adds, any of her dignity). With Louis XIV France was reinstated, in spite of the league of States to balance her power, but with Louis XV the downfall began. Externally France was gradually thrust into the background by the emergence of so many independent powers which offset French power and, fallen from her domination, she had no alternative but to accept this balance. Internally, by the excessive laxity of the government, by the abrupt change of fortune - the result of the daring enterprise of a "foreign adventurer" - especially by the spread of the philosophic spirit which undermines all religious, political and military institutions, power became weakened, degraded, and destroyed by the pressure of the forces which sought to limit it by checks and balances. Once divided, its days were numbered, until finally the factions within and the nations without induced the Revolution. But nature, stronger than factions and nations - nature which wills that there be one power in France and that France be the power of Europe, as Europe is the power of the world - nature will render abortive the opposed designs of all factions and all nations: with irresistible force, she will reestablish in France

unity and independence of power and at the same time give France preponderance and pre-eminence to which the fixed character of her language, her political and religious constitutions, and her territory, entitles her.[65]

But if the illusions of Bonald, in 1801, concerning the peace and stability of Europe had been short-lived, his hopes in 1807, that Napoleon would assure for ever the pre-eminence of France, were even more quickly dashed. After the successes which exceeded even Bonald's expectations; after the apogee beyond all aspirations, came the reverses and the fall; after the European empire, came the dismemberment. France was returned to less than her natural limits, to less, even, than the frontiers of the ancient monarchy.

At the very moment that this dismemberment of France was being prepared by the victorious powers, Bonald took up his pen to reclaim France's natural rights. Not so much in the interest of France herself as that of Europe and world peace, the Allies should allow France her natural northern boundary - the Rhine. And it was in the name of God's principles that Bonald formulated this petition[66] which, had it ever

65. Ibid, pp. 196-197.
66. "Réflexions sur intérêt général en Europe"; cf "Considérations sur les principaux événements de la révolution française", Mélanges, Œuvres VII.

reached the Congress of Vienna, would certainly have struck the delegates as either temerarious or hilarious.

Referring again to the Treaty of Westphalia, Bonald compares the war which that Treaty had concluded with that which had ended at Metternich's round table, expressing the hope that the terms drawn up by the latter will be more enduring than those of the former. The Thirty Years War was, Bonald considers, a war of religion kindled by the Reformation; the war which began with the Revolution has been a war of irreligion, provoked by the "so-called philosophic" doctrines, which are after all, in Bonald's view, merely the final consequence of the Reformation. The Treaty of Westphalia was nothing more than a masterpiece of diplomacy:

> that art which serves
> very often only to
> betray others, and even
> sometimes to deceive
> itself. 67

The Treaty of Vienna will be, Bonald does not doubt, a masterpiece of politics:

> that science which
> establishes among nations
> the most natural
> relationships and, therefore,
> the greatest stability. 68

67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.

Europe needs order, and order rests, in the great European family, upon two bases: religion and monarchy. With the Treaty of Westphalia, the spirit of the Reformation grew into a popular system - in politics and in religion. With the Congress of Vienna, the monarchic system must - and will - be restored.

The coalition of the powers against the Empire Bonald views as the concerted effort of Europe to return France to her natural, monarchic constitution. It is a shining attestation to the social and political importance of France; an avowal of her preponderance. In France's darkest hours Bonald finds consolation and optimism in her ancient brilliance. It is France, Bonald proclaims, which, through the centuries, has preserved the political and religious truths. Europe will be the first to suffer, if she deprives France of the means of fulfilling her destiny. It is therefore in the political and religious interests of the Allies not to diminish France's power or territory. If France loses her natural boundaries, she will not rest until she has recovered them: France will thus be a permanent aggressor in Europe until she is restored to the Rhine.

On the other hand, once her natural goal has been attained, France will cease to be a danger because, having nothing more to acquire, she will cease to be

acquisitive. Instead she will be an example to the rest of the world - a unique example of a society which, having nothing to fear and nothing to lose, can direct all its efforts towards perfecting its customs, its laws, its administration, and its constitution - the example of a society fixed, completed and perfect. France will be an inspiration to Europe; the arbiter and oracle of nations.

And so, in defeat, Bonald finds victory. Ironically, the theory of French supremacy reached its perfection at the very moment that the actuality had ebbed to the level of Waterloo. The audacity of Bonald's demands can only be explained by his invincible faith in the absolute truth of his principles:

> I am not saying:
> 'Here is my scheme'
> for I do not have
> a scheme. But I am
> saying:'Here is the
> scheme of nature'. 69

Perhaps it is only just to allow Voltaire the last word:

69. Théorie du pouvoir, Œuvres III, p.115.

How can we avoid bending
in prostration before
an old-clothes-man,
who proves to us that
his history has been
written by God himself? 70

70. Dictionnaire philosophique, Vol. IV, p. 72.

— SECTION VI —

CONCLUSION

After nearly forty years devoted to the task of imparting to a hostile generation an insight into God's constitution for his kingdom on earth, Bonald died, ten years after the dethronement of his Bourbon ideas, still convinced that the Holy War had been - or was about to be - won. Catholicism must, and would, triumph over atheism because the will of God must necessarily transcend the fiendish plots of sceptical individuals, caught always between an inconsequence and a blasphemy. And, more than anything else, it was in the universality and uniformity of Catholicism that Bonald found its strength. Whether Bonald is refuting Rousseau's notion of the general will, or attempting to imitate Montesquieu's comparative sociology; whether he is contradicting Condorcet's concepts of truth and education, or analyzing Voltaire's philosophy of history - one common factor has emerged, and that is Bonald's "obsession for unité, uniformité, and union": horizontally, his collectivist vision of

corporate societies; vertically, his sense of the continuous and abiding in the "secret liaison" between the past, the present and the future. The future always retains something of the past since there are, in time, at least two factors which are changeless: God and man. What is required, therefore, is not innovation but renovation. Novelty is pernicious: it is an unnatural offence against society. Luther sought out novelty and society has paid the penalty - with the French Revolution. Shrinking from the temporal into the eternal, Bonald sought refuge from the mutable in the unchanging. The diminution of universality or eternity seemed to Bonald an admission of defeat.

The thesis that, in Rousseau's fundamental precept of the inalienable character of sovereignty lies the origins of totalitarian democracy, is a recent one.[1] But the possibilities of what Professor Cobban describes as "the transmutation of democratic gold into totalitarian dross"[2] were not lost on Rousseau's contemporaries - particularly, of course, his opponents. It was because he perceived this element of tyranny in the French Revolution that Edmund Burke

1. J.H. Talmon, The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy (London, 1952).
2. In Search of Humanity, p.194.

opposed it so bitterly. And Lenormant claimed[3] that, from 1789 on, the aristocrats in the National Assembly had consistently cited Rousseau's testimony in favour of a monarchic state. Bonald was apparently not aware of this trend; during the term of the National Assembly when aristocratic plaints were still heard, Bonald had not broken with the Revolution and its principles. But when, in exile, Bonald began to analyze the ideas underlying the Revolution, he discovered, as they had - men like D'Antraigues, Malouet, and Bergasse - that many aspects of Rousseau's political theory could be adapted with ease to the counter-revolutionary cause. The first victim was, of course, the general will. On the basis of Rousseau's testimony - that sovereignty could not be represented - Bonald was able to argue quite consistently that the people could not, therefore, be sovereign. For the people, Bonald substituted society, and for society, the State, personified in the king. The king thus became the expression of the general will, which bears no relation to a counting of heads. Stripped of its individualist connotations, Rousseau's "general will" became the basis of Bonald's absolutism; just as Rousseau's theory of the unity of purpose and action

3. Lenormant, "Rousseau, Aristocrate" (1790), p. 24; Joan McDonald, Rousseau and the French Revolution 1762-1791 (London, 1965), p. 129.

was translated into Bonald's monarchic "will-love-force" hierarchy. And, too, the concept of innate ideas - which, Bonald argued with justification, Rousseau and the deists had borrowed from Christianity - was only too easily repossessed and counter-parried. Although Rousseau, in Bonald's opinion, confused the natural with the native state, he nevertheless postulated - what became the core of Bonald's work and the key to the Revolution - the idea that the natural state is the perfect state; and its converse: that the imperfect state is an unnatural state which cannot last because nature - "invincible nature" - abhors aberrations. Just as Bonald saw in Rousseau's concept of the general will the justification for his corporate society, so in Rousseau's natural law he found further validation for his Catholicism; and "natural" Bonald equated with "divine".

Of all the products of the Enlightenment, Montesquieu's Esprit des lois lent itself most readily to Bonald's corporate view of society and Bonald was not slow to take advantage of Montesquieu's definition of the role and function of the social "corps", particularly the nobility. The nobility, both agreed, is an intermediary and hereditary body designed, not to estrange the king from his subjects, but to draw

them closer together. But while, to Montesquieu, the nobility is only a monarchical phenomenon, to Bonald it is a social necessity - the very embodiment of liberty and equality: equality, that is, of opportunity to ascend to the noble ranks, and liberty - the right to do so. Not only is society composed of "corps" - but society itself is a "corps". Undoubtedly Bonald's view of the organic nature of nations owes much to the Esprit des lois. Despite the fact that for Montesquieu the climate is the decisive factor in moulding the national temperament, and for Bonald it is the institutions and traditions, the format is common to both. But Montesquieu's most original and valuable contribution to the Enlightenment - one which even the Enlightenment for the most part was dubious to accept - was his empirical and comparative sociology. It is interesting, therefore, to find Bonald attempting to follow Montesquieu's lead in this respect. For Bonald, in his analysis of the history - customs, origins and traditions - of the Germans, the Gauls, the Romans and others, truly believed that he had begun with the "reality of history". Always, however, his sociological analysis lapses from relativism into absolutism. Where Montesquieu was the theorist of the contingent and the probable, Bonald

aspired to political eternity: what Faguet described as Bonald's "elixir de vie sociale perpetuelle".[4]

The same collectivist motif is discernible in Bonald's refutation of Condorçet's principles of enlightenment. Condorçet's fundamental error, as Bonald saw it, was to envisage universal enlightenment in individualist terms. To seek universal truths in individual minds seemed to Bonald to be a blatant contradiction. Synthesis, he believed, must replace multiplicity and, adopting Condorçet's own watchwords - reason, truth, and education - Bonald set about redefining them; in order to produce a picture of enlightenment which was truly universal, Bonald determined to denude it of all its individualist connotations. Like Henry Adam, Bonald sought some great generalization which would finish the clamour to be educated. Reason became, in Bonald's scheme, universal reason - which is revealed faith. Truth became universal truth which is embodied in revelation. And education became universal education which is moral and religious instruction based upon revelation. Enlightenment therefore became, in Bonald's hands, the universal acceptance of revelation which meant, ultimately, the Catholic church. The Ten Commandments

4. E. Faguet, op. cit., p. 82.

- which represent the promulgation of the truth, the establishment of human reason, and the basis of society and education - represent, then, perfection. Condorçet's darkest hours were, for Bonald, the dawn. Nevertheless, the doctrine of earthly social Utopianism introduced a new dimension to Catholicism which, added to the belief that this mortal perfection is the final goal of human progress, brought Bonald very close to the Enlightenment indeed. Bonald, it is true, abandons Condorçet's straight-line theory of progress in favour of a cyclical pattern more accommodating to his counter revolution; and his belief that society must be perfected first - that the perfect man is feasible only in the context of the perfect society - owes more to Rousseau than to Condorçet. Nevertheless, there is, in Bonald's assumption that the doctrine of progress presupposed the doctrine of perfectibility, no mean debt to Condorçet's "disguised sophism".

Bonald's attitude towards history reaffirms his conception of the totality of society - whether it be religious, domestic, or political - in the face of the nonentity of the individual. There is, in Bonald's view of history, something of T.S.Eliot's "vast and impersonal forces". In the "philosophic

history" of the Enlightenment Bonald detects what he considers to be the flaw of all eighteenth-century scholarship: its individualism. Not only do Voltaire and his contemporaries over-estimate the role of the individual in the tide of human affairs, but they also regard history as a science, analogous in its methods to the physical sciences. History, Bonald concurs, is a science, but it is a moral science; therefore the philosophic method (where to begin in doubt is to end in doubt) is inapplicable to history, where objectivity - far from being "apathie sublime" - involves commitment. Fearful of the Scylla of indifference, Bonald steered instead straight for the Charybdis of indoctrination. Of all the philosophes Bonald might have chosen to attack on the score of indifference, it is ironic that he should have chosen Voltaire. For Voltaire - at least in his advice to historians - probably came closer than any other to Bonald's idea of "truly philosophic history": that which should point morals and establish generalizations. It is even possible that Voltaire's Philosophy of History (although Bonald does not mention it) provided Bonald with the alternative to the eighteenth-century's philosophic history. While their historical conclusions were diametrically opposed, certainly their opinions

concerning the ways and means of arriving at those conclusions have points of similarity: not the least of which was their moralizing pragmatism. Having smuggled into history their moral objectives, it was only too easy to extract them again as expedient lessons. In the great eighteenth-century controversy, it was history's reputation rather than the serious practice of the craft which profited. Bonald's own essays as an historian reveal his naive craving for unity and symmetry - at any cost. His history of France moves more in the realms of hypothetical fancy than actuality: it is not so much a study of the past as a vision of the future.

Rousseau, Montesquieu, Condorçet and Voltaire - Bonald's chosen adversaries - brought to his works their own pre-conceptions: natural law, reason, perfectibility, and history. If Carl Becker's contention - that, in the eighteenth century, these were the words without which no enlightened person could reach a restful conclusion - is in any wise accurate, Bonald might even be termed enlightened, were it not for the fact that he continually sought to equate the terms he had borrowed with the terms he knew: God, religion, grace, and sin. Bonald had been forced to meet the Enlightenment on its own level of

apprehension: to offer a rational apology for the terms of his faith, even if this at times resulted in what one critic described as a strange Christianity in which religion is justified only as a panacea for lawlessness, and a still stranger philosophy in which rational argument is invoked to reject reason itself.[5]

It would be fallacious, therefore, to dismiss Bonald simply as the postscript of the Middle Ages - the prophet of an outworn gospel whose very watchwords have been almost forgotten. On the contrary, although Bonald's gospel may have been outworn, his watchwords were the watchwords of the Enlightenment. Indeed, perhaps the most interesting observation to emerge from the thesis - which is less a comment upon Bonald than upon the Enlightenment itself - is the facility with which the old wine could be stored in the new vessels.

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5. F.B. Artz, Reaction and Revolution 1814-1832 (New York, 1963), p. 73.

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